

This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + Refrain from automated querying Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at http://books.google.com/









. . • • . .

•

| |-|-

•

• •

THE LAMENT OF DIVES

BY

WALTER BESANT,

Author of "DOROTHY FORSTER," "THEY WERE MARRIED," Etc., Etc

NEW YORK
FRANK F. LOVELL & COMPANY
142 & 144 WORTH STREET

3.1410 3.62.11



Copyright, 1889, By John W. Lovell.

CONTENTS.

	CI	IAP'	TER	I.,					
The Lament of Dives,			•		•	•	•	•	PAGE.
	СН	AP	rer	II.					
The Dinner Bell, .	• '	,	•	•	•	•	•	•	28
			ER						
The Confessions of a l	Fian	cée,	•	•	•	•	•	•	58
		APT	ER	IV.					
Changed, Indeed,	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	66
		AP.	rer	v.					
Kit's Arrival, .	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	81
	CH	AP'I	ER	VI.					
The Unexpected, .	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	95
			ER						
What Has Come to H	im ?	•	•	•	• .	•	•	•	106
	CHA				•				
Let Me Explain, .	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	118
			ER	IX.					
With Friends so Old,	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	129
			rer						
After Luncheon, .									150

CONTENTS.

	C)	HAP	TER	XI.					
The Pionic, • •	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	162
	CE	IAP7	rer	XII	.•				
The Judgment of th	e Sec	ond	Day,	•	•,	•	•	•	178
	OH	APT	ER	XII	ī.				
' Understand Me Clea		, 17	•	•	•	•	•	•	186
	CH	[AP]	ER	XIV	7.				
"Tell Me About You	ursel	ves,"	•	•	•	•	•	•	198
	CF	IAP	rer	xv					
The Last Day, .	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	206
	CH	APT	ER	x v	[.				
The Last Evening,	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	219
C:	HAP	TER	тн	E L	AST		• •		
Take vour Freedom		_	_	_	_		_	_	989

THE LAMENT OF DIVES.

CHAPTER I.

THE LAMENT OF DIVES.

"Is it really five years, Kit, since last we met? I suppose it may be five years; but I have left off counting Time."

"Why should you count Time, dear Dives? You have only to enjoy all the time there is. Make the most of every moment. When it is finished, live in the next. For the rich, time crawls. It is by those who work that Time must be counted, because in the space he allows to them they must make their money. This is the reason why, to men who work, he flies, he gallops. Lord! how short is the day when it is spent in work! What says the song, my own song?

"Long is long for those who toil not, Only long—for those who play."

There were two young men sitting in a set of Chambers. The place was simple Pall Mall: the time was two in the afternoon: the season was June. The day was very hot—everybody remembers the great heats of June in this present year of grace: the windows were thrown open for the air, and from the street below came up the continual rolling of the cabs and the tread of many feet.

They had been lunching together; the table was not yet cleared, but they had left it: one of the two had taken the largest and easiest chair in the room, and was now curled up in it with every outward indication of complete physical comfort. The other was standing at the empty fireplace, leaning against the mantel-shelf. The room was like any other well-furnished bachelor's room, except that there were in it a greater number of curios and odd things picked up abroad than one generally sees, even in these days of travel, when Japan is nearly as close to London as Brighton, and even Pekin is little farther off than then was Paris.

The young man leaning against the mantel-shelf, he who had left off counting Time, the owner of these curios, and the tenant of the Chambers—known by his friends as Denny Stirling—should have been distinctly, even enviably, good-looking. In fact, he was possessed of regular features, good eyes, light hair, and comely limbs; but his handsome face was marred by a cloud of chronic discontent, and his speech by a weariness which was not at all like the Nineteenth Century Lassitude of which we used to

hear so much and now hear nothing. That has gone: it has retired into the Limbo of old Fashions, Fads, Hobbies, Affectations, and Pretences by which small souls seek to seem great. The weariness was not, with Denny Stirling, an affectation at all; this discontent really possessed his soul. A young gentleman ought not to be always grumpy, particularly a young gentleman who has everything that, in the opinion of other young men, ought to remove grumpiness. It is, indeed, a condition of mind which sits ill upon all youth, even on the very stonebroke. In the days, not long ago, when young men of superior intellect and the Higher Culture showed, by a superior melancholy, the burden laid upon them by the mere presence of the uncultured, they all with one consent avoided grumpiness. could stand apart, chin in air: one could be melancholy in falsetto: one could sprawl; but one could not be grumpy. It is indeed a condition which betokens, or perhaps produces, depressed vitality.

The other young man, he who lay low in the easy-chair and purred with mere physical ease and comfort, was in figure stout, even round: in complexion ruddy: he had short brown hair: his nose was broad; this is always an excellent sign in man, and betokens good fellowship: his eyes, which were protected by spectacles—not a pince-nez, but plain out-speken spectacles—gleaned behind those ornaments like unto the big Fiji cats' eyes: quite ordinary ob-

· •

.

broad daylight. It is, after all, only a return to the good old times. The Jinn was wont to sit upon the bare rocks by the sea-shore in the open day, rejoicing in the sun: he visited the fisherman in his hut at noontide: in the cool of the afternoon he walked, for all the world to see, under the shade of the trees in the Caliph's garden. It is therefore no new thing that the Other World should call, so to speak, upon the World of London. Is not the West End as good as Thibet? Why should Arabia the Happy be preferred to Kensington the Comfortable?

No historian before myself has discovered that these condescensions or advances, these offers of familiarity on the part of the Other World, occur regularly at intervals of about a hundred years, and always toward the close of a century. Amazing things are recorded of Alchemists, Rosicrucians, Adepts, and others who had possessed themselves of the celestial Arcana. That was at the end of the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries. Again, at the great awakening of a hundred years ago there appeared prophets, clairvoyants, and mes-At the present day, there are those who merists. annihilate space: those who bring messages from the dead with the regularity of the telegraph department: those who practise palmistry and divination. Those who lifted tables have retired in sulks. Therefore, the things which I have to describe need not be considered as in any way more remarkable than

other things which daily happen under our very noses, and are witnessed by most credible spectators; and as you will presently discover, they were neither remarkably new nor remarkably original. No historian or simple reader of history expects things new and original.

"But what are you doing, Kit?" asked Denny.

"I have been called to the Bar. I wish they hadn't called me, because the fees finished off all that was left. I am starving, Denny."

He looked up and laughed, with the glass in his hand. Bacchus himself, dressed in modern garments, might thus have looked and thus have laughed.

"But you are fat, Kit; fat, smiling, and apparently happy."

"Who would not smile over a bottle of champagne? But I am starving all the same. That is to say, I actually have to work. Denny, my friend," he proceeded solemnly, "work is the common lot; it is a fatiguing lot. I work"—he sighed—"for such of the journals and organs and things as will have me. I don't get on very fast because"—he yawned—"I work so little. If I smile it is with an aching heart, because I abhor work."

"He abhors work!" Denny repeated it with wonder. "Why it seems to me as if there was nothing else in the whole world worth having."

"I have had, I own, ambition. I would rise; I

would soar,"—he flapped his elbows and raised his feet off the cushions,—"but this fat, foolish body of mine forbids. It will be fed with meat and drink, fumigated with tobacco, lapped in slumber in bed and laid at rest in club chairs. It is a beast of a body. I could become a great novelist or a great dramatist but for this body. As it is I have to remain the greater part of the day in idleness, and therefore in poverty. Sometimes—but never mind. And you?"

"I am still, as you said, Dives. I am a millionaire." He said this with a face of the deepest gloom. "Nothing more. I continue in great riches."

"Fie upon it for a troublesome complaint! yet, methinks there are remedies."

"Not when one is so enormously rich as I am. Well, Kit, your poverty does you no harm, your laugh is as strong and genuine as ever. I suppose you still make up stories and tell them, and still write songs and sing them."

"I do. If I want them sung I must sing them myself, so I go to the club and sing them there. And I make plays, and have to act them myself if I want them acted. Tell me about yourself. You have been travelling. What else? You look less cheerful, now I come to look at you, than a man should in your delightful position. Life—I quote from one of my unacted and unfinished comedies—is like this glass, full of bubbles. They rise and

sparkle and disappear; yet they are delightful when we catch them. Why don't you sit and catch those bubbles? Go on, sweet Dives."

"I have nothing to tell at all. I've been travelling. The world is now full of hotels, and they are all exactly alike."

"If it's a good pattern of hotel, why not? Come now. Why not?"

"I have done nothing, and I never shall do anything, except receive my rents and spend some of them. That is all."

"The Emperor Domitian ended a similar career by catching flies. You used to talk, formerly, I remember, about certain responsibilities——"

"Oh! yes—yes—we used to talk." The young man dropped his hands into his pockets as if they lived there. "When we were young we used to talk a good deal of nonsense. It did no harm, and helped to pass the time. I've gone through those illusions."

"That seems unlucky. Now, for my part, I cherished every one of the illusions. Sometimes, in ambitious intervals, I hope to rise by means of those illusions. Hang it, sir, if it were not for the dear old illusions—Love, Friendship, Unselfishness—do you suppose that any one would take the trouble to read my novels when they come to be written, or to see my plays when they come to be acted? Are you so rich, Denny—so awfully rich—as to be able to part with those illusions?"

"I am awfully rich," Dives groaned.

"Ah! A bank-note still holds out prospects of unheard-of joy to me. That is why I am still a credulous person, I suppose."

"We used to talk about the advance of humanity—humanity—the sluggish lump which refuses to be advanced. Look at the hosts of clergymen and clergywomen, who do nothing all day long but stir and shove this great lump. And they never move it an inch. All it wants is to eat, drink, and do no work."

"But about these responsibilities?" Kit insisted.

"If I employed any people, I might own to responsibilities. But I don't. They have converted the Works into a Company, and bought me out. If I had an estate and tenants I might feel responsibility; but I have none. I do not possess an acre of land or a house anywhere. Nobody pays me rent: nobody receives wages from me: nobody curses me and nobody blesses me. My money is all in funds and securities of that kind. I have no responsibilities at all—except to humanity in the abstract; and humanity, my friend, is, as I said before, a sluggish lump."

"Well, there are individuals among the lump—I am, myself, mostly concerned with the individuals. You have relations, I suppose?"

"I believe there are distant cousins. They hate me because I've got all the money. My lawyer knows about the cousins; I don't. He gives them money, sometimes. Practically, I have no relations."

"A hard case. Well, you can fall in love. That will pick out one individual out of the lump. There are lots of really nice girls who wouldn't mind marrying a rich man, however rich he might be, if he would put his case prettily."

"Love? Well . . . sometimes I think so. But I distrust women. They would only marry me for my money."

"Dear me—this is sad. You really must get something to do, Denny. Why not go in for politics? No? There is Literature. There is Art."

"Without the stimulus of necessity one cannot—one is afraid of being third rate, after all."

"You've got 'em pretty bad, old man," said Kit. "About as bad as they are made."

"When a man has nothing in the world to do but to look about him, he begins to learn the exact truth about men and women and the world."

"Perhaps," said Kit,—"perhaps; I never loved the exact sciences."

- "You lucky beggars who've got to work---"

"Lucky beggars—lucky—who've got to work!" Kit repeated, staccato.

"You can go on with the old illusions. You can believe in philanthropy, lofty human nature, disinterested self-sacrifice, pure patriotism and all the rest of it."

"These are very alarming symptoms," said Kit.

"Nobody knows"—young Dives plunged his hands deeper into his pockets—"nobody can understand what a disgusting thing it is to have so much money. It takes the color and the taste out of everything. It makes everything yellow. It turns everything into cold boiled veal."

"Cold boiled veal," Kit replied, thoughtfully. "It is a food seldom exhibited at the club.

"If one was an eldest son, a man of family, with a title and an ancient name and a good old house, it would be endurable. As for me, I came into an immense pile of money and a going concern when I was ten. I've got no family: I can't even show a coat of arms: the ancestral smockfrock or the leathern apron is within the memory of the aged: the Going concern is changed into a Company, so there is nothing but money."

"Dreadful!"

"It began at school. All the other fellows looked forward to work: they had a career before them and distinction to win. The rich boy—people don't understand how lonely it makes him—knows that he needn't work at all. He hasn't got to learn anything. You might as well expect a girl engaged to be married to learn a trade. The older you grow the worse it is for you. If you've got any abilities—Lord knows whether I have any—it seems like taking the bread out of some other fellow's mouth

to cultivate them. You happy fellows who've got no money can show the world how clever you are. All I had to learn was a taste for claret, so to speak."

"Very good thing," said Kit, "if you can get good claret. The taste without the claret is what they have given to Tantalus—and to me."

"Other fellows," Dives went on, "when they want anything have got to work for it. That makes them understand how good it is. As for me, the moment I begin to want a thing I am able to buy it. You know you can't value anything if all you've got to do is to order it."

"True . . . Most true."

"And when you come of age and go out into the world, you find out—every rich man finds this out in a very short time—that mankind are mostly made up of those who beg and those who steal. When he discovers this, he has to spend most of his time in protecting himself."

"One has heard something of this kind before. You put on armor, I have heard—the whole armor of Indifference."

"They find out where you are, though you hide yourself under an assumed name in an island of the Pacific Ocean. They pelt you with letters: they lay every kind of trap for you: they ransack your record to find out your weak places: they threaten, cajole, flatter, weep: they lie in wait for you when you go out of the house: they get inside the door on false

pretences: they develop inconceivable craft and subtlety, and all to get your money."

"And you meet them ——?"

- "I never answer any of the letters. I never reply to any of the sturdy beggars, I never give anything to the earnest secretaries, the starving curates, the importunate widows, the distressed authors, the paralyzed old ladies——"
 - "Poor old things!" said Kit.
- "I have all the letters sent to my lawyers, who have a printed form of refusal which does for any case. I answer none but the invitations—the invitations," he repeated with a weary sigh. "I suppose, that you, now, are still able to accept an invitation with the hope of pleasure?"
- "If there is good claret in the house and the girls are nice, why not?"
- "Why not, for you? Under the smiles of the hostess you do not detect designs: you do not see an intention to catch a prize for her daughter—you do not fear that the host is going to spring a trap upon you in order to get some of your money."
- "None of these terrors assail me," said Kit.
- "In short, you have not learned to mistrust the whole world."
- "I have not. But I now perceive where the yellow comes in."
- "Happy man! Your poverty is your best treasure. Oh!" his languor dropped from him and he

spoke in earnest. "There ought to be no rich men: it is bad for the State that men should become rich: it is ruin—ruin—for a man to be born rich. Wealth makes paupers, beggars, and thieves—all our charity only generates more paupers and more thieves. We alleviate suffering in order to disguise the cause of suffering: men must learn to combine—they can only learn this, like every lesson, by suffering: you cannot raise or lift, or shove along humanity by persuasion, by coaxing, by bribing: the only thing that will save the world is pain. Push the sluggish lump and it bellows: starve it and it moves. When humanity has been lashed into understanding, men will combine—not before."

"Oh! I say," said Kit.

Denny stopped with a queer kind of laugh.

"I ought to be the last to preach a doctrine, of course. That is because I am rich—if I had nothing I could preach what I believe. Never mind—come back to the mistrust. Man, I mistrust, I say, the whole world—whom do I not mistrust? My oldest friend—the girl whom I might have loved—every poor wretch who is starving but who may be an impostor—every good cause—even philanthropy itself—every church and everybody in it, from Archbishop to pew-opener."

"I now understand," said Kit, "the cold boiled veal."

"And you understand, perhaps, something of my position."

"It is a great pity," said Kit thoughtfully, "that you cannot borrow my eyes for a little."

"What would be the good of borrowing your eyes?"

"If you had my eyes you would perceive that there are people in the world who never beg at all and only steal on recognized principles—as when the Q.C. takes fifty guineas and doesn't even read the case. You would also make the acquaintance of people who would help you to keep up the old illusions—love, friendship, sincerity, everything. I am in love myself—desperately in love, with the dearest, sweetest, loveliest little fairy in the world, and I ought to know. Illusions, sir? Hang it—they are the only realities. You poor rich creature, if I could only lend you my eyes for a little spell and make you see—what a difference there would be in you!"

"Yes . . . Kit—yes—if——"

"Come down and live with me for a bit. Come in disguise. Pretend to be a Pauper. My friends won't care, provided you are a clever and clubable Pauper. To be at once a Pauper and a Fool," he added thoughtfully, "must be the very Devil."

"It would be no use. I should be found out next day. Then the distressed gentlewoman would be upon me again."

"The long purse can buy pretty well everything,"

said Kit. "Why not look about for a mercenary Jinn or a hard-up fairy and pay him to do your bidding, and change you into something else for a while—say, a strolling banjo-man. There must be spells and incantations in existence, if one knew how to get hold of them. You might get a lamp or—or—I say, what the deuce is the matter?" He jumped out of his chair as he asked the question, gazing in wonder on his companion.

For Mr. Denis Stirling was giving evidence by face and eyes and by gesture of surprise in extremity—of such surprise as can be expressed in the old-fashioned way, by saying that the color forsook his cheeks; that his jaws stuck, this used to be a very happy and feeling way of putting it. He leaned back no longer but stood upright, showing, very strongly, the symptoms above delicately hinted at.

"What is it, man?"

"I did not know. I had forgotten—I thought it was only an old wife's story."

"But what is it? What has happened? What is going to happen? The air is electric—I feel . . . I feel . . ." His voice died away in a whisper.

Suddenly he felt a thrill like an electric shock, first up one arm, then the other. This extraordinary sensation, accompanied by the strange look of exaltation and of authority newly sprung up in his friend's face, made him reel and stagger though he was sitting in the chair.

- "I had quite forgotten," Denny repeated.
- "Forgotten what?" And again Kit's voice died away in a whisper. He tried to pour out for himself another glass of champagne, by way of cordial; but his fingers lacked the strength to clutch the bottle, and he felt as if the earth were rushing beneath him.
- "I learned it in Damascus," the other returned. "I paid a large sum of money for the secret. My friend, your words spoken in jest, recalled a possession which I hardly ever thought to employ. With your permission—if you will—that is—be so extremely obliging——"
 - "What am I to permit?"
- "What you proposed, I say, in jest, can be effected if you please."
 - "What did I propose?"
- "That I should see things with your eyes. In order to do that we should have to exchange souls."
- "That is impossible. There are no longer any slaves of the Lamp or Ring."
- "Perhaps. But the thing remains. Consider a moment, Kit." He spoke quite steadily and fluently; but kept his eyes fixed upon his friend, who had no choice but to meet his gaze. And still the earth sank under him and things went round and round, and it was as if the room and everything in it had vanished clean away. "Consider, my friend. This exchange is no new thing. It is, on the other

hand, quite a common thing—we read of it everywhere. The incantations of Circe are founded on this secret. By means of this the great Afreet Sukhi conveyed the soul of King Solomon, for three days, into the body of a kitchen scullion. Thus was Luciustinus formed into an Ass: thus King Robert of Sicily was made to become a beggar. Nay even parts of men have been sold or exchanged. Thus are the cases of Peter Schlemihl, who sold his shadow: Luke Lucraft, who sold his appetite: Dr. Jekyll, who changed his outward appearance: The Baron Von . . . who . . . not to speak of Mr. Bullitude and the boy——"

"You cannot, really."

"I can if you will permit me. The thing, as I said, is not new."

"Hang it," said Kit. "The question is whether it is new to me. It is no new thing for a baby to be born; but it made all the difference in the world, and dying is quite common, but the thing will have all the interest of entire novelty to me. Are you joking, Denny?"

"Certainly not, see . . ." He went into his bedroom and returned with a box, about the size of a glove box, made of scented wood, carved. "This contains a phial. Behold it!" He opened the box and showed a long flat bottle lying in a red silk cushion within. "This is a very precious box indeed. There are not half a dozen boxes in the world

containing anything so precious. The secrets, my friend, which belong to the soul have been discovered long ago—long before those which belong to the body. The contents of this phial act upon the will as cocaine acts upon the nerves."

"Why upon the will?"

"I don't know. If a man takes a few drops of this preparation he surrenders his will, for the time, completely to the person who administers it. Look at me. Do not take your eyes away." He spoke with authority, but indeed Kit felt that his eyes were fixed, he was fascinated, as the bird by the snake. "If you take them, for instance—."

"If I take them"— repeated Kit, feeling as if he were in a dentist chair and had taken chloroform.

"If you take them, I shall carry out your proposal, I shall exchange with you. That is to say, you will enter into my body as into a lodging—you with your own mind, your own memories, your own learning, your own inclinations. I into yours. Do you consent?"

"For how long?"

"We can say a day—a week—a month—just as you like. But to do anything at all in the time, we want three months at least. We will say three months exactly to the day. Are you agreed to that?"

Kit murmured something. He was growing weaker and weaker.

"Remember, you will have absolute control of everything that is mine. You can buy, spend, lend, give, do what you please with the whole of my fortune. I trust you with it unreservedly. Only I warn you that you will find it desperately dull. I, on my part, shall have to get along as best I can with your more slender means. You shall have, for three months, just as fine a time as unlimited wealth can give you."

"It is like a dream," Kit murmured. "I will make Rosie the happiest girl in the world. They shall all be happy—all be happy."

"Then-you consent?"

"With joy—with pleasure—with . . ."

Kit lifted his head and opened his eyes. He was standing with his back to the fireplace, leaning against the mantel-shelf. He turned and saw, to his amazement, in the mirror, not himself at all—but Denny Stirling. On the shelf stood the ivory box and in it lay a long flat phial, from which a few drops had been taken.

"I told you so." It was his own voice—Kit's voice—that spoke to him, and in the chair sat Kit himself; but he had replaced the glass of champagne upon the table, and now sat up looking strangely active and wide-awake.

"I told you so," Kit repeated. "Don't look so astonished, man. The trick is done."

"What trick? Oh! I remember—I remember.

Have I been fainting? I felt faint. What have you done? Where am I?"

"You will come round in a moment. Stay—drink this wine. So—that is better. The stuff is awfully strong. As I told you, it acts on the will like cocaine on the nerves. A most valuable preparation. Well, my friend, you are all right again now, I hope. You are, for three months, Denis Stirling, and I, for three months, am Arthur Christopher Cotterel."

"Oh!" The nouveau riche straightened himself "Yes!—now I remember. You mesmerized me, I think, and you gave me something or otherand, upon my word, old man, you are the greatest magician of modern times. Maskelyne is nothing to you. And—I say —I am Dives—I am Dives!" He threw out his arms and laughed aloud. And then he sighed a deep and grateful sigh. "I am Dives," he repeated. "I have got possession, for three months, of an enormous income. Oh! it's splendid! As for you, Denny my boy—I mean Kit—I am sorry for you, because you will have to be on the trot in a way you hardly expected. You've got fifteen and sixpence in your pocket: you are three weeks overdue with your landlady: and there is a sheaf of little bills lying on the table. A very lively time you are likely to have."

Kit sprang out of his chair.

"For three months I've got to work or starve.

Why, I feel as strong—as strong. Oh! it is splendid! I have got to earn the daily bread."

Denny sank into the empty chair and took up Kit's abandoned glass of champagne, and fell back with Kit's laziness.

"For three months," he murmured, "nothing to do but to lie down and to enjoy the fruits of the earth in due season, and to make everybody else enjoy them. For three long months! What a chance! What a chance!"

CHAPTER II.

THE DINNER BELL.

When the first dinner bell rang those who were playing tennis on the lawn began to play up faster, in order to make the most of the minutes left to them: those who were strolling and talking together in the garden turned reluctant steps and slowly sauntered homeward: those who were sitting in the shade, lazily moved their limbs and looked regretfully at the setting sun.

It was an evening near the end of August, when the sun goes down about seven, and the dinner bell tolls also the knell of parting day. The day had been fine; the sky was blue overhead, and rosy to west and east: the air was warmed through and through, the fragrance of jessamine and lingering honeysuckle was borne on the breeze; a few overblown roses hung upon the bushes: the voice of the blackbird came from the woods, with the prolonged cry of the yellow-hammer: the gardens were filled with the prodigal luxuriance of late summer and early autumn—tall hollyhocks flowering at the top, big sunflowers hanging their heavy heads, sprawling nasturtiums, gladiolus broken down by the wind,

ragged masses of sweet-peas lying over their sticks, and white-belled figwort—the bells filled with bumble-bees.

The tennis players were young men and maidens, whose sports, when they play together, it is all times a joy to behold: those who walked in the gardens were young men and maidens going two and two,—garden walks were originally made in pious imitation of that sloping way constructed by the Patriarch, handrailed on either side, which led into the Ark: those who sat on the terrace, or under the walnut-tree in the basket-chairs, were also young men and maidens. It was, in fact, a company of young men and maidens: if I were young, I should desire no better company: when one is no longer young, there is no greater pleasure than to look from a-near upon such a company, and to be among them, though not of them.

Let me never cease to look on while the Hours themselves, wreathed with flowers, dance, taking hands, and sing with lusty voices, laughing with merry lips and love-lit eyes and dimpled cheeks, flashing white arms, and tossing fair curls over shapely shoulders. They dance not for me, but for the young who dance and sing and laugh, and run along with them, not knowing that they cannot choose but run. Earth hath no lovelier sight. Let me never turn from them to look upon those other Hours, which attend the old. Wrinkled dames are

they—but their faces are sometimes kindly and full of pity, and they dance and sing and laugh no more. But though they are old, they are still the Hours, and they never cease to run—faster and faster still—and drag along with them the gray beards and the old ladies, the rheumatic and the gouty, the asthmatic and those who cough. Now at last we understand that we cannot choose but go with the Hours, though the pace is so cruel and the goal is so uncertain.

The house is not more than five-and-twenty miles or so out of London, but only the county guide and hand-books know it, because there is as yet no railway within eight miles of it, and therefore there are no visitors. It is let for the summer, or for a longer time if he should desire it, to Mr. Denis Stirling. There is no prettier house anywhere in the country. It was built at the time-Henry the Eighth being then young and of a slender figure—when the old manor houses, thatched, timbered, plastered, were everywhere being pulled down, and replaced by more stately buildings in brick and stone. This house is of brick, a house built on two sides of a square—the two which face south and west. It is of two stories: —the roof is high, pierced with many small dormer windows, and covered with red tiles: the square projecting windows give, it is true, less light to the rooms than those of a modern house; but such rooms as these-low, long, panelled with dark cedar,

hung with portraits, brightened with gilding here and there, and with painted coats of arms, cabinets full of plate and china, polished armor and gleaming weapons—want less light than modern rooms square and lofty. The front of the house is covered with ivy cut close and trimmed, so that it shall not hide the brick mouldings over the windows and the shield above the door. The rooms look out on a broad terrace, which would be incomplete without its pair of peacocks: beyond the terrace is a goodly space of lawn: beyond the lawn are the gardens: first, the old garden made five hundred years ago for the solace of the ladies, a sweet and lovely place wherein to dream the happy hours away with a companion who shall receive the thoughts and fancies of an idle summer morning. Here are the things which those fair damoyselles loved: the fountain and the dial, the walk covered with greenery of branches interlaced and protected from the blasts of north and east by a tall hedge of holly too thick for Boreas at his worst to penetrate: the trees are mulberries, and apple-trees with twisted and moss-grown branches: the flower beds here are formal, the flowers are of the kinds beloved of old-nothing here that is not praised by Elizabethan poets. The broad and new gardens beyond are full of pretty things, but they lack the charm of age.

The house is part of the village. This is in accordance with old English ideas: rich and poor must

still live side by side in love and friendship; the Church, which here also forms part of the village, not dividing but uniting them. Except for its tower, which is older, the Church belongs to the same period as the house: they have restored it quite lately, and its sharply cut stones want the rounding hand of We will come to look upon it again after three hundred years. Let us agree to meet again this day three hundred years outside the lych-gate. In the churchyard are the graves of the villagers: in the church are the tombs and brasses of the people to whom the house and village have at various times belonged. Outside the churchvard and the house is the village green, and in the middle of the village green there is a circle of tall elms surrounding the old well. The cottages of the people are on the other side of the green. And there is nowhere a more peaceful or more beautiful village than this—nowhere is there a fragment of Arcady more truly genuine. Surely surely the people must be full of all the rural virtues. Here contentment, gentle speech, and kindly thoughts must ever dwell. This to believe, raises our love and respect for the rural virtues, and encourages us in their daily practice, even when we go back to town, where also the virtues of Arcady may be practised.

The tenant of this house sat lazily in a basketchair, one of the India kind, where you can lie back and put up your feet. He sat with his head on his hand, looking out upon the garden and upon the people in it. When you saw Denny Stirling last he was discontented; .too much wealth had made him grumpy: now the sunshine of content glowed upon his face. He was talking to an elderly lady—there must always be an elderly lady in every companywe pretend that it is necessary on account of the convenances, but it is, really, because the contrast of age with youth is so useful to the latter. Gentry was the name of this old lady. Everybody in the profession knows Sophia, the water-color painter. She is not, to be sure, quite the leader in that branch of English Art, but by that unwearied brush of hers she first kept her mother: then she kept her husband and her mother: next, her husband and her mother and her three children. still keeps herself, because so long a struggle leaves nothing behind it in the way of accumulated wealth. She sat on a low chair beside her host, her hands crossed in her lap, her face sweet and benignant, set in its frame of gray hair, a picture of lovely age.

"Denny, it is disgraceful. You ought to be up and playing lawn-tennis—or riding—or walking—or doing something," said the old lady. "You really are the very laziest man I have ever seen."

"Lazier than Kit Cotterel, with whom you are always comparing me?"

"Much. Because he is obliged to do something, sometimes. Otherwise he would starve."

"I like lying down and looking on and listening," he murmured. "All sorts of thoughts come into a man's head while he is looking on and listening. Pretty thoughts: pathetic thoughts, so beautiful that they cannot be written down."

"Man does not live on beautiful thoughts alone."

"Then Sophia mine," he said, "on what do you live?"

"I live partly on memories," she replied, sadly.
"When one comes to seventy years there are memories in every breath of wind, in every hour that strikes—even in every face that one sees. The dead are with me, Denny, and I live for them."

Denny took her hand and pressed it.

"You remind me," she said, smiling, "every day more and more of my poor Kit Cotterel. Not in appearance, because you are tall and—well—good-looking, sir; while Kit is short and fat, and not beautiful at all."

"He isn't?" said Denny with a laugh and a quick gleam in his eyes.

"No; not a bit. Even Rosie admits that. But you have so many of his little tricks. He is fond of pressing my hand, just to show that he understands me and loves me: you know he is a kind-hearted lad, our Kit."

"Humph!" said Denny. "Is he?"

"You talk like him: you love to call people by

their Christian names, like him: you dislike ceremony, like him: even play and sing like him."

"I told you, Kit gave me all his songs."

"Yes: and you have caught his manner. And—oh, dear me—you are so lazy."

"Why are we here if not to be lazy? It is the summer season: it is holiday: it is always afternoon: we are all resting."

"Yes—that is very well. You can be as lazy as you please. There is the difference. To Kit, his laziness is the ruin of his life: because he will not work, he will not succeed. When it is too late he will repent and reproach himself. And there is that girl to consider: he will spoil her life too."

"Beast of a Kit," said Denny. "Pitch into him, Sophia."

"I was in hopes that you, as his friend, would speak to him."

"I have, Sophia, times out of mind. I have said to him, speaking into the looking-glass, a thousand times: 'Kit, you are a pig.'"

"Why into the looking-glass?"

"Oh! for convenience of course. Why else? 'Kit,' I say, 'you are a pig.' But it is of no use, none. Kit must go his own way. My opinion is, that when he has had a long rest, and the opportunity of learning what his friends frankly think of him, he will reform. He must. He shall—he will—reform. I will make him."

"You? No, Denny, you will only make him worse."

At this point the dinner bell already spoken of began to ring.

Sophia got up obediently.

"Think of the poor girl, Denny, and do what you can. And now I must go. Alas! only a week more—less than a week. It is terrible to think that one must go back to London again, and to the mill. Alas!"

"Alas!" Denny sat up lazily and echoed the sigh. "As for ever doing it again, you will be too lazy, Denny. Besides, such a thing is never repeated. It will become a beautiful dream. I have for once had the life of a country house in the midst of wealth and plenty and luxury. I think I have never seen in all my life before so many peaches and grapes as I have actually devoured in these months. Dennyyou foolish, lazy, inconsequential person, you have made an old woman happy. You have her blessing, my son; and as for the girls—but here they come." The thing itself is so simple that one wonders why it has never been done before, and why it is not done every year by every rich man. Yet it is so unusual -in fact, it never had been done before by anybody -that to the girls themselves it seemed as if the man who did it had been sent down straight from Heaven, in order to do something for those who work so hard and get so little. This young Dives, as kind-hearted as he was rich, actually invited to his house—and that the most lovely house ever imagined—as many girls as the house would hold for the whole of their summer holidays, if they could get any holidays. He invited them in companies and troops: he also invited them individually and severally, because no girl likes to be considered one of a company; and he invited young gentlemen to meet them—yea, pleasing young gentlemen, open to the sweet influence of Venus, that bright planet more powerful even than the Pleiades: impecunious they were mostly, like the girls, but hopeful, and for the most part with both feet on the ladder. He said, this benevolent Dives:

"Come, you poor things. You are young: your feet are aching to dance—you shall dance the soles off your shoes if you like: your eyes are dim with tears, because your lips cannot laugh—here you shall laugh as much as you please: you yearn in your sultry lodgings for the fragrance of the flowers, the babbling of the streams, the rustling of the leaves—here you shall have garden, and stream, and woods: you long for the society of other young people, especially of that sex which makes sport and causes laughter, creates mirth and invents everything for delight and for use—here you shall find them: you desire the play of youth and its talk, the words which mean nothing and yet so much—here you shall have that play. Come to me; I will give you

feast, and dance, and song—perchance, if kind Heaven will, you shall hear the voice of Love. Other rich men, moved by the terrible fate of him who suffered Lazarus to lie at his gates, draw cheques for hospitals and the relief of the starving. As for me, I think of the poor gentlewomen for whom nothing is done, though they also lie at the gates of the rich man's house, and eat the crumbs which fall from his table. Come then, all who can."

Was there ever a more excellent Dives? What gratitude, what love, could be found adequate in return for hospitality so gracious and so unbounded? Nay—it was whispered that railway journeys were paid; that mysterious gifts of frocks, hats, jackets, gloves—and I know not what—arrived for those girls who were invited. One should not inquire too closely into these things. Certain it is that there was no girl, among all that company, who had reason to be ashamed of her dress, and how that circumstance could have happened without mysterious or miraculous intervention one cannot understand.

They came running in, I say, laughing and chattering—only twenty minutes left for dressing. Said I not that all were young? The men were under thirty—well, thirty-five at the outside. After thirty-five, as well as I remember, one can no longer pretend to the *première jeunesse*: the women were all under five and twenty, with an average nearer to twenty-one than to twenty-five. In previous parties

at this Summer House of Holiday there had been ladies of more advanced age, but, for certain reasons of his own. Denny reserved a party all young for the last four weeks. At the first aspect of the girls, one became conscious of certain small differences: they were not in all respects like the girls one generally meets at garden-parties and dinners and evening jumperies. Perhaps they were not dressed so well: it is difficult for the male historian to speak with authority on this point: certainly most of them showed a creditable leaning toward the beautiful in raiment. On the other hand, free thought, abhorrent to the average feminine soul, marked their taste. Apart from dress, their faces were somewhat graver than those of maidens who belong to society, and their eyes were steadier. For, you see, these girls were all of them, every one of them, of those who work for their livelihood. This fact will account for many little points of difference. The men with them were also working bees: not one among them all of those who spend their lives in shooting and fishing and hunting, and so earn the poet's reproach of barbarian. Now, if you come to think of it, a country house filled with such guests as these—young people all, and young people driven by necessity, possibly kind necessity, to work for their daily bread—is rather remarkable, even at a time when so many remarkable experiments are tried.

One of the first of the girls to run up the steps

was Rosie Romaine. Everybody called her Rosie, and I believe she liked it. But indeed, in this house, the use of the Christian name was the only rule. was as if they belonged to the Early Church. Rosie was one of the race of Little Women whose history and origin will be found in my forthcoming great work-if ever I find time to write it-on the Races of Women in Great Britain. There are not now so many little women as there were twenty or thirty vears ago. Then they abounded: you will find them in the novels, everywhere: they went out of fashion, and were succeeded by the dumpy, stumpy girl, whom you will find in the works of Leech: these in their turn, went out, and were followed by the tall girls who now reign, with Mr. Du Maurier for their Prophet.

None the less, there are never wanting some who still worship the Little Woman: and though most girls show that touching obedience to man's wishes which goes straight to our hearts, and grow tall to please us, and remain dumpy when dumpiness is fashionable, there are still some little women who survive and possess the dear little dainty ways once so dear to all men, and especially men of six feet and upward. They are mantraps of a dangerous kind, though their taller sisters affect to consider them insignificant. Insignificant, indeed! There is no such thing as an insignificant woman.

But the Little Venus is little all over: her face

and hands and feet and arms must be on the smallest scale: in their smallness they show the beauty of proportion more sweetly than their larger-limbed sisters. And the Little Venus is like her big sister in having many varieties and kinds. Chiefly I love two kinds: the dignified little woman-nowhere in the world can one find greater dignity than in the little woman—and the little woman who has no dignity at all. She has everything else, but no dignity She is lively, merry, laughing, charming, piquante and affectionate. She is never silly, and she is never affected: she is womanly and human through and through: she may have a temper—she often has so much temper that she is never out of it—but she is never envious nor spiteful: she is large-hearted: she neither thinketh nor speaketh ill of her sisters. When she is happy she is entirely happy: she loves warmth, softness, and ease: she would like all the world to be rich and to possess the things which make life beautiful.

Such a little woman was Rosie. She added one quality, all her own: she was caressing. Every man who talked with her perceived affection for himself—sisterly affection, perhaps—and interest in him. She was caressing in her eyes and in her voice: on his very first introduction, every man understood that this poor girl had been waiting and looking for the chance of talking with him, and that she was at last perfectly happy. This kind of thing makes a

man satisfied with himself and friendly disposed toward the girl. No one, therefore, was ever found to speak evil of Rosie, not even to call or to think her a coquette, even after he had proposed to her—everybody always did that on the second day—and had been refused—as always happened—and had been taken to the nearest hospital to get his shattered heart pieced together again.

See the contrariness of Fortune. She, who should have been born heiress to a nice little Palace, with a beautiful carriage and fur wraps and six-feet footmen, and unlimited credit with Madame Hortense, was forced to reside in one of the little houses near the Addison-road Station, convenient for the train—third class. Fate had robbed her of her father, the famous Unsuccessful Water-Color Painter. It was also decreed that she was to have no money and a copious—a cornu-copious—supply of brothers and sisters, and a ridiculously inadequate allowance of gloves, frocks, and bonnets. To add that she inherited her father's artistic genius and his want of success, is only to give an additional detail to these incongruous arrangements of Fate.

Among those who proposed to her was Kit Cotterel. She was taken unawares—it was an unfair advantage: the thing was done one summer evening, when she was perfectly happy—except for her boots: she had on nice gloves, a new frock, and a hat newly trimmed: she was up the river—oh! rare chance!

The air was warm and fragrant: the lover was as eloquent as if he had been the most industrious and successful creature in the world: the maiden melted: she had been no more caressing to Kit than to anybody else: and she went home the *fiancée* of a man as impecunious as herself and as uncertain of the future.

Rosie ran up the steps. When she reached the terrace she turned round once more to look upon the gardens.

"Oh!" she sighed, "how lovely it is! And oh! one more day is nearly done, and only a week is left!"

Denny Stirling, to whom she addressed the sigh, responded with another so hollow as to be almost a groan. Sympathy is as infectious as yawning: when one young person begins to confide in another, the other—if of the opposite sex—sighs in response. I knew a man once who drew all hearts by the way in which he would mingle his tears with the tears of any girl who was at once confiding and beautiful and sad: yea—he would sometimes mingle tears until lips met lips, so that he achieved a great reputation and become popular. He would also have been rich, but he gave away all his money to the girls who cried.

"Yes," said Denny, "three months are soon gone. I thought they would last forever."

"Alas! they are nearly gone."

"Will you come out after dinner, Rosie? It is going to be a lovely evening."

"I am afraid I cannot, any more."

"Why not? There will be stars in the infinite azure, with deep blacknesses between them. I will show you the blacknesses, and the stars you can see for yourself. The jessamine is always most fragrant after dark. There are cock-chafers buzzing across the lighted windows, and buck-beetles. Gnats are lively under the trees, and we will look for a glowworm. You told me the other night that you had never seen a glowworm. With you for a scientific companion, I could search for that glowworm half the night."

"There are also in the garden, sometimes, men who forget what is due to their friends," she replied with severity.

"Never. There cannot be such men. If any one has seemed I say, Rosie, seemed—to forget this important duty, it was for the first and only time. Furget their friends? Why, they would have no one to horrow from."

" Well, Denny, I did think-"

There is no reason why a sentence need be com-

"You will come, Rosie?" he answered, and if any the limit been listening he would have thought that there was something—even a great deal—of tender-there in his pronunciation of the Christian name.

Nature has infinite varieties of everything, but in nothing is she more various than in the pronouncing of the Christian name.

Rosie looked at him reproachfully. That is, she honestly intended reproach. But she broke down, and her eyes became sisterly and sorrowful, if not affectionate.

"I will come, Denny. But—remember." She held up a finger of admonition, and passed in. What was he to remember? The young man remained outside, looking after her with an odd expression of bewilderment and anxiety.

The next who came up from the tennis-ground was a girl in pink, with a pale blue blouse, held in place by a leather belt and a bright buckle. It is a dainty costume, and the pride of this year of grace. This girl was Vernon Cheviot-everybody knows that this is, only her literary name, and that her real name - Molly Damper-is not nearly so distinguished. There are, however, many advantages in a nom de plume: the real name can be reserved for reality, while the assumed name belongs to Art. Thus the public and the private characters may be kept apart, and nobody will grumble if a man who prophecies in public as nobly as a native of Carmel is in his private capacity peevish and ill-conditioned; and nobody will feel distressed to hear that a poet, godlike in his utterances, quarrels with his wife and is weak-kneed in the matters of strong unsweetened.

There is a prejudice against the literary young lady. She is believed to be plain and to be careless about dress: she runs, it is thought, to nose and to spectacles. These be calumnies invented by those who have got pretty faces and shallow wits. Vernon Cheviot's is a case which should destroy this prejudice. The young lady who becomes a poet or a novelist or an artist of any kind is not necessarily plain. The trouble is, however, that she generally begins to succeed when she has lost the freshness of her beauty. But Vernon Cheviot had already begun to succeed.

"I am to take you in this evening," said her companion, one of the youngest Masters of a great Public School. "You shall scold me all through dinner, if you please. I would rather be scolded by you than——"

Here they both disappeared within the door, and one of the peacocks squalled for luck, and so the rest of the speech could not be heard; and, as this young lady has very little to do with the story, it matters not.

Then the rest came trooping in. There was the teacher from the High School. She had acquired so vast a knowledge of philology that the Cambridge Examiners gave her a place in the first class of the Classical Tripos, and the High School Board gave her another place in their School worth exactly one hundred pounds a year—so magnificent is the en-

dowment of feminine Scholarship. But this immense income she kept to herself, a secret locked up in her bosom-because no High School teacher ever owns to her salary. It is a Rule of the Profession. The young lady has also contracted in the course of her studies, a prejudice against everything that exists—the whole of the Social Order, the Reign of Man, the Subjection of the Sex, the desirability of She kept these opinions a good deal to herself, but occasionally she brought confusion into the social circle by asking an elementary question. have promised this girl to write her life, therefore one need only record of her here that she found the Society frivolous, and was especially disappointed with a certain young Master just spoken of. He had been so high in the Mathematical Tripos that his head touched the stars. Yet he constantly laughed and played. He was engaged in the most responsible work possible—yet he made merry and talked lightly. It was he who went into the house with Vernon Cheviot.

There was another—but, no. Why enumerate them? They were gentlewomen all, and had for the most part been brought up in the expectation of being provided for by somebody. Among those who came here for a holiday and a rest during Denny's three months' experiment were those who try Fortune with the art of Fiction, and those who woo her favor with the art of Painting: there were short-

hand writers, typewriters, governesses, clerks, players of dance music, writers of addresses, interviewers. guides, secretaries, indexers, translators, - everything. They came to rest and to breathe, expecting nothing more than the boon of fresh air, with simple food and shelter. They found a stately house, with a return of all those things which once they had known, and had long since lost by reason of Madame Poverty, who drives away from her victims everything that is pretty, happy, and comfortable. They come in succession, following each other without a bronk: they feasted, danced, sang, played in the gardens, acted, made up, had picnics, and arranged tonnis matches: they had as much fruit as they could ent -think of poverty so great that there can be no fruit! They had the highest time ever known: and they wept salt tears when the time was up and they had to go away.

Where their host found them I know not. None of the girls ever heard of him before: but he had means of his own, for they came from every kind of place—from the houses and homes where governesses and those out of work, or always badly paid, pass their unsatisfied evenings: they came from dismal studios where nothing that is painted is ever sold: from desks full of unappreciated writings: from schools where they worked all day long and had no privacy, no time to call their own: from the British Museum where congregate the women who hang

upon the outer fringe of literature—wherever girls are found who have to work, there this wonderful young man discovered the girls whom he invited to his house. And all who were left for this, the last week of the house, ran in at the ringing of the bell as if they were so many nuns hastening to complines.

The last to come in was Geraldine. You know the kind of girl who is a kind of queen in her circle. She imposes her sovereignty by no assumption of claim or heirship or right Divine. It is conferred upon her without explanation and accepted by all without question. Men do not try to flirt with her; when she smiles on a man she confers distinction: she is by nature a grande dame de par le mode: she is too high for most: small men and mean men shrink from her. Geraldine was tall-somehow the natural queen is always stately. For her calm face and her tranquil eyes, which seemed to reveal a soul in which there was no touch of earthly passion or taint of earthly meanness, she might have stood for Beatrice. As for earthly meanness, of that she had none: as for earthly passion, is not earthly love held to be a type of heavenly love, or even the gate by which many are led to that joy ineffable? Yet some such women never know that passion, because they never find the man who is able to awaken within them the sacred fire. She, too, was one of those who work. She was a decorative artist, and chiefly spent her time in designing furniture.

She was not a tennis-player, and therefore the costume affected by the other girls tempted her not. She was dressed in white with a flower at her throat. Beside her walked a lad of twenty or so: he was a slight and slender lad, no taller than herself: he was narrow in the shoulders and hollow in the chest: a beautiful boy—fair of hair but not ruddy—he looked up at his companion, as he walked, with large and full eyes—they were eyes of worship, even such as those with which Dante followed Beatrice.

"Rest this evening, Robbie," said Geraldine. "Do not talk much at dinner, and go to bed early. To-morrow we will read your verses again, and we will talk them over and think how we can find a publisher."

"It seems as if I must go on working, Geraldine. I am so full of thoughts and I have so little time. Let me sit up a little while to write by myself at night."

"No, Robbie. You must go to bed early. And you must not think of the worst. Why, you are better already, and you have only been here a fortnight. See what fresh air and a holiday can do for you."

"Yes, I am better here. But next week I must go back to the old drudgery. What is the good of getting into Heaven, if one has to go out again after three weeks? No—no—forgive me, Geraldine—I shall have had you and this place for three long

precious weeks. Oh! I shall have enough to remember all through the winter. Forgive me—I am not ungrateful—no—no. In the drudgery and the misery of it——"

"Yes, Robbie; but patience—have patience. Things may happen."

"What can happen to one who has no friends and no money? But I shall remember. Oh! Geraldine"—he took her hand and stooped and kissed it—"I shall remember."

He walked slowly up the steps and into the house with hanging head.

"Is he better?" asked Denny, looking after him anxiously.

"His cough is better. But there is the winter before him and——"

"Yes-I know. Can nothing be done?"

Geraldine made no reply; but followed the boy.

Strange and wonderful are the ways of rich men. Here was Denny, the young owner of millions: he knew, he could not choose but know, that all the boy wanted was rest, sunshine, relief from work, a warm climate: given these, he would recover and might grow strong; without these he would die—he would most surely die. And yet he seemed to love the boy. Nobody, except Kit Cotterel, had ever been so kind to Robbie or shown so much interest in him. Yet, he asked—he, the rich man, asked—if nothing could be done! And he sighed as he looked after

him, and something like a tear rose in his eyes! And he could stop it if he chose! Strange it is to be Dives.

Left alone, Denny Stirling looked about him as Rosie had done, and then he sighed.

"I've written to her," he said, "every other dav. And she still replies exactly the same! She must love me as much as ever. And yet she carries on. Oh, it is her nature! What has she said to me here that I could object to-over there? I can't keep away from her. I am longing all the time to throw my arms round her and tell her all. But, I mustn't. She would never believe me-never! That's the worst of being before your time-or behind it. I dare say in a year or two an exchange of this kind will be all the fashion. It will be an admirable leveller and peacemaker. This kind of thing thev used to do in the days of King Solomon. And now they'll begin it again; but we are before our timesand Rosle would never believe it. I must be very careful -very. A single moment off my guard, and " He shuddered and went in to dress.

CHAPTER III.

THE CONFESSIONS OF A FIANCÉE.

AT ten o'clock the air in the garden was still warm and balmy. Those who sat or walked under the stars breathed the fragrance of many flowers, though the season was so far advanced. The heavy scent of jessamine hung in the air as persistently as a London fog. This perfume, as is not generally known, formed a principal ingredient in those acts of witchcraft which were designed to suggest thought, induce temptation, and destroy the will. Especially it was found sovereign for softening the heart and opening it for the reception and the bestowal of confidence. Every young person has felt this soft influence of jessamine. A very fine flowering specimen formerly grew in the garden of Eden, close to the apple-tree. Those who were in the garden on the terrace not only breathed the incense of this seductive plant, but their souls were lulled to rest by the music which floated out of the doors and windows of the This goodly company sometimes drawing-room. danced, sometimes sang, sometimes made and acted plays, sometimes talked; but whatever they did, there was always music—sometimes such as falls

peacefully, and sometimes such as stirs and stimulates, and sometimes such as sets the feet spinning—but always music.

* Two of the company were walking up and down the terrace: one—you may recognize her by her slight and slender figure, clothed in white, a lace shawl over head and shoulders—was Rosie Romaine; the other—a tall form walking beside her with hanging head, as if despondent—was Denny Stirling. Rosie kept her promise: she came out after dinner, but not alone; others were in the garden, but they were in pairs, for mutual solace and protection against wild beasts or ghosts.

"Back again," the girl was saying,—"back again to the old life."

"Poor child! and—what was that you said yester-day? the unsatisfied longing!"

"Anybody who is too poor to have what she wants suffers, I suppose, from unsatisfied longings! Oh! how I yearn—how I long—how I pray for the things I shall never get!"

"Tell me what they are—some of them."

"They are everything. I should like to surround myself with pretty things—a pretty house with pretty furniture, pretty dresses, and pretty people. Poor people may be good and interesting and heroic, and anything you please, but they never have pretty things about them—never."

"Poor child! Fate is cruel. Where there can be

no beauty, there should be no desire for it! But then the world would never get on at all, would it?"

"If we only had a world which had done getting on, and was quite got on, you know—arrive—so that we were all rich and artistic and really nice together! and if the easy life was served out to everybody instead of one or two here and there."

"You would do no work, of course."

"Of course I would not. Every woman loathes task-work—though, because so many have got to do it, some of us pretend to like it. I should like to wake up every morning with a sense of holiday, nothing before me but to feel the joy of living. No anxiety about getting work, and necessity for looking after it. That seems to me the only way in which this world can be turned into Heaven."

"And in this life, this beautiful life, will there be"
—he hesitated—" would there be any place for love?"

"It is so like a man to ask such a question," she replied, smiling. "Oh!" Superior. "Oh! Denny, have you got to learn, at your age, that a women can never be happy without love? You might as well ask me if there would be no air, no light, no sunshine in life. Why, every dream of every girl is brimful of love. Of course, there will be love. I can speak openly, because, you see, I am engaged."

"I forgot. 'Yes, you are engaged."

"Yes," she replied shortly—meaning: "I am indeed; and to your friend."

The second second THE PART OF THE PA The same of the same of THE PERSON NAMED IN COLUMN TWO IS NOT THE PERSON NAMED IN COLUMN TWO IS NAM THE RESERVE THE RESERVE THE THE RESERVE THE PERSON NAMED IN THE RESERVE AND DESCRIPTIONS AND DESCRIP THE PERSON NAMED IN The same The same of the same -The second secon The course of the late of the THE PERSON NAMED IN THE RESERVE TO THE RESERVE TO the second second The Party of the P -THE PERSON NAMED IN STREET, T the second secon The State of the S The Part of the Part District Name of Street, Street, St. THE PERSON NAMED IN

still, I believe; but they are all poor with distressingly large families of their own."

"Yes," said Denny as despondently as if he himself were as poor as Kit. "This age has witnessed the final degradation of the uncle. He can sink no lower. He is now married—forgetful of his nephews, selfish beast—and he has children of his own. I forgot though. Had I not myself an uncle, who gave his little all to me, and nothing to my cousins? But why can't Kit—this poor dear Kit—make money like everybody else?"

"He is so horribly lazy, you see. He cannot work. He can do nothing but lie and smoke his pipe and dream away the time. He is Lob-lie-by-the-fire. Sometimes he writes verses. Mostly he sits about with his pipe. In the summer it is in the open—and in the winter it is in the most comfortable chair that the club has to offer by the fire. And he dreams."

"You can't sell dreams," said Denny. "There ought to be a market though, somewhere, for really good, first-class, artistic dreams."

"He is going to write the most wonderful novels and plays that were ever seen. They will take the world by storm. But they don't get written. Nothing ever is written except just what is necessary. Oh! I am very fond of Kit—everybody is." Why did the young man groan at this point? "But I am under no illusions as to the life before me."

"For example—the kind of life?"

"Just what it has always been. I was born in a muddle, and I shall go on in a muddle. You did not know my poor dear father, of course. There never was a more delightful parent, and the way he believed in his own work quite to the end was won derful. But nobody ever bought his pictures, and really I now begin to believe that they may have been, after all, deficient in—well—strength. Do you understand?"

"He was, in fact, unsuccessful."

"Yes. Well, you see, Kit, in literature, is exactly like that parent of mine in art. He is always going to do great things. Some day we shall marry, I suppose," she sighed. "I don't believe Kit will be half so nice as a husband. We shall find a horrid cheap flat with three or four rooms and a kitchen. We shall have a single servant, who will trample on us. We shall always be behind-hand with the rent and the washing: there will never be any money for nice things, or for going anywhere or doing anything. As for society, what can one expect? And as for ever being able to pay up and begin fair, you might as well expect Kit to appear in a complete new suit from head to heel. Debt and duns and tightness is my portion in the world. I am a thirdclasser, too fine to talk to the other third-classers."

"No—no—Kit will change. He must, he shall." Rosie shook her head.

"I know my Kit," she said, "better than you. And I have no illusions. And poverty will be nothing new; we have been poor and in difficulties. One is used to it. When I was quite a little thing I remember wondering what it would be like, having plenty of money. It is our fate to be poor. We cannot escape Fate. When such people as Kit and I marry, the situation is quite easy to foretell."

"There is your own Art."

"Oh! I have not forgotten it. My own Art earns for me about as much as the wages of one of your housemaids. It will add a trifle to the family income, and a great deal to the family worry."

"Have you seen Kit lately?"

"No. Three months ago he sent me word that he had got some work to do which would take him out of London. I suppose he has been lying on the seashore dreaming and smoking all the time."

"Has he not written to you?"

"Oh, yes; he has written. He writes to me three times a week. And he says nothing about his work."

"There, you see! What did I tell you? Three months on end of work,—three steady months of hard work—grinding work. There's a splendid beginning for you! There's perseverance!"

"Yes," she replied, doubtfully. "Tell me, Denny, you who know Kit so well. What do you think of his style?"

"You mean the style of his songs and verses?"

- "Yes, and of the more ambitious things, the things that he sends to Editors,—the things they generally send back. Have you seen any of them."
 - "I have seen all of them."
 - "Then what do you think?"

She did not stop to ask him how it happened that he had seen all these things.

- "Nay-first-what do you think?"
- "He has been as much rejected as most men. And I really think he ought to expect nothing else."

Denny started.

- "Have you told him this?"
- "No—I have not. When you are engaged to a man, and he brings you a thing and reads it aloud and throws all his heart into it, and thinks he has put into it all he has in his heart, and asks you, with a trembling voice and eager eyes, what you think of it—what can you say?"

Denny grunted something inarticulate.

"Can you tell the poor boy that it won't do at all—that it wants re-writing,—that what he thinks to be there is not in it at all?"

Denny shook his head. •

"No, one can't do it. A girl can do nothing but purr and murmur and tell him how sweet it is, how true and touching,—the best thing he has ever written—the best thing she has ever heard. Then he goes away happy. It is no good for a man to be engaged unless his girl can send him away happy."

- "None—none," Denny replied, hollow-voiced.
- "He never has the patience to re-write his things to sit down and worry and to work at them. He gives ten minutes to his work, brings you a pretty little sketch and calls it a finished picture."
 - "Yes, I fear, I suppose—that may be so."

Denny took his chin in his left hand and stroked it. This is a gesture which indicates embarrassment or difficulty. It may also mean other things.

- "Don't think, please," Rosie went on, "that I am taking away poor Kit's character, or talking unkindly about him. All my friends say the same thing."
- "Do they indeed? It is truly kind of them. Friends—candid friends—are so useful and so kind."
- "Why, Denny, must you be so sarcastic? Kit himself might have been speaking."
- "No, no, Kit would have spoken less like a finished picture: more like a sketch."
 - "Nobody talks better than Kit, for that matter."
- "I am glad to hear that he has some good qualities."
- "One would think you were offended. Of course he has good qualities. He is the most generous of men, to begin with. He gives away most of his money and lends the rest."
 - "And lives on-?"
 - "No; on what remains, he gets into debt. Poor

Kit, you see, in money matters is a terrible donkey. But then everybody loves him."

"How can you—how can everybody—love a man who is a donkey and who is always in debt and whose style is sketchy?"

"Absurd! you love the man—not his debts or his style or his donkeydoms. They are not a part of the man."

"Well, Kit ought to be happy," said Denny, "if only because one woman—"

"Thank you," she interrupted him quickly, "if one woman didn't, another would. Men can always comfort themselves with that reflection. Poor, dear thing! I know what he is doing now."

"What is he doing?"

"He is sitting somewhere at the club, or in his chambers, with a pipe. He is perfectly happy, though he hasn't seen me for three months. He dreams that he has just brought out a novel over which the world has gone frantic. Or else, that he has just produced a play which has driven the town mad. This kind of dream comes to him every day. Or else he is planning wonderful ways of making everybody happy."

"It seems a harmless occupation."

"Perfectly harmless. Kit will never make his wife jealous. She might, to be sure, wish to see him more practically occupied. She will have the butcher's bill, the laundress's bill, and the third ap-

plication for the rent, spread upon the table, with two pence in her pocket; while her husband will be wrapped in his dreams of wealth and success. What a pity that it is not enough for a husband to be harmless."

I suppose there is hardly anything more offensive to a man than to be called harmless. To be called ill-tempered, surly, grasping, prodigal, unjust, may be borne with philosophy; but to be called harmless—actually not able to injure anybody—a creature without a kick in him, is a deadly thing to say. It was too dark for the girl to see the hot blush—of sympathy for his friend—mantle to her companion's brow.

"One of Kit's idle dreams," Rosie continued, "was to do exactly what you have done this summer."

"Was it? Then he did dream something practical."

"What is the use of dreaming things that you can never carry out? He used to say, however, when he was rich—'when' you see———he meant to take a country house and fill it all the summer with girls and people—like these who are here, you know—without money, but just as fond of society and everything as if they were rich."

"Yes—I suppose I borrowed that from Kit," said Denny. "I borrowed all his ideas as well as his songs. I wish I hadn't."

"You wish you had not! Oh! Denny—and you

have given so much happiness to everybody. You cannot wish that happiness had never been. Don't say that, Denny," she added in her most caressing voice. "And we are all so grateful to you for what you have done. Oh! so grateful—and we all owe you so much. Oh! so much."

"Rosie," he cried with passion irrepressible, "I don't care for all the rest—if you alone——" But she fled.

"I am a Fool," said Denny with emphasis. Then he walked quick to the end of the terrace, where there was a stone bench, upon which he sat down, also emphatically. "A Fool!" he repeated. Then he took his chin in his hand again and began to think. He had a good deal to think about. He had just heard some very remarkable unpalatable truths. To begin with, the girl to whom Kit Cotterel was engaged had no illusions about her lover. How can you be in love without illusions? They are, the anatomist knows, at the very root and foundation of But, as this young man knew not, here is one of the divine and unfathomed mysteries of the feminine heart. The thing which is absolutely impossible in man, is done every day by the merest girl, when she loves a man and yet has no illusions about The girl who was engaged to Kit confessed that she had habitually deceived him as regards the beauty and value of his work, which she always understood to be sketchy. Kit, she knew, would never

get on—he was too lazy—he was too dreamy; he would always be poor and always in a muddle; the life before her was one of continual struggle; she would be dragged down and kept down by poverty; and all because her husband was so lazy—so dreamy—so unsuccessful.

He sprang to his feet. No—no—it should not be. After a long holiday of three months, after this Neapolitan laziness would be satisfied: even the idle Kit would be able to turn over a new leaf—a new leaf. Denny sat down, again with a sweet smile, attracted by the imaginary possibilities thus presented to his mind, and for full a quarter of an hour dreamed of splendor and prosperity, of fame and fortune, to be found written on that new and lovely leaf.

CHAPTER IV.

CHANGED, INDEED.

When Denny awoke out of this soothing dream he returned to the drawing-room, quite cheerful again, and ready to dance, or to play, or to take part in any kind of festivity. He had, it is true, felt a little annoyance at Rosie's frank utterances—really, no man likes to hear the plain unvarnished truth about himself, especially from his own girl,—from another man's girl, even, it is hard to bear—one's own girl ought to wrap him in a rosy cloud. This vexation had now vanished: the beatific vision of the new leaf consoled him. Fond wretch! He thought he was going to have complete control over that new leaf. Every Resolver thinks that. But you shall see.

He came back to the drawing-room, therefore, quite happy.

"Sing us a song, Denny."

"What shall I sing?" He sat down, turned a smiling face upon his friends, and ran his fingers carelessly up and down the keys. "What shall I sing? Will you have Kit's song 'For those who

play'! It is one of his lightest and his latest! He gave it to me three months ago—words and music."

He had a soft and musical voice of no great power, but of sufficient compass, and he managed it skilfully.

Oh! the earth is full of treasure,
And the soul can find its fill:
"Tis a garden-house of pleasure—
For the joy of those who will.
Earth's treasures waste not—spoil not;
And they follow day by day;
Life is long—for those who toil not;
Only long—for those who play.

Twine the roses—bind the lilies— .
While we dance and while we sing;
For the hours, sweet partner Phillis,
Fly like swallows on the wing.
Yet each moment as it flieth
Doth so sparkle in the sun,
That its mem'ry never dieth
Till the very day is done.

Let us wander in the meadows,
O my love, and whisper low:
Let us linger in the shadows
With the ghost of long ago.
Morning, noon, and eve shall find us
Hand in hand and cheek to cheek:
Oh! the mem'ries—how they bind us!
Oh! the past years—how they speak!

Good old Time is no despoiler
When he giveth gifts so rare;
But the miser and the toiler,
And the student in his chair,—
These he fills with tears and sadness
For the swiftness of his way:
Life is long and full of gladness—
Only long—for those who play.

Among the guests was one newly arrived, named Pinder, more commonly old Pinder. He is certainly no longer young Pinder. Men of fifty permit themselves to call him old Pinder. He has trodden the pavement of Fleet Street and the Strand for nearly fifty years, and has been during the whole of this period perfectly well known to all the editors and to all the journalists. He now possesses white locks and a flowing beard: he carries his seventy years with vigor, and he still does exactly the same work as when he began at the age of five-and-twenty. He calls himself an Art and Dramatic Critic; but it is whispered that his views on Art are antiquated, and his criticism of the Drama apt to repeat itself—it is also said that he now finds it difficult to get work. Perhaps for the latter reason he had been invited to this house.

Mr. Pinder was not accustomed to the society of ladies; he therefore remained in the drawing-room only for the short time he considered due to politeness: he was not found of music; he therefore sat by himself in a corner and read the evening papers, which arrived about nine o'clock. Without his evening papers—he always read them all—he felt himself cut off from all that one holds dear.

Just as Denny finished his song, and while the echoes of the last notes were rolling about the rafters of the roof, everybody was startled by the half—the better half—of an interjection more fitted for

the smoking-room of the club than for a drawing-room.

"God bless me!" cried Sophia, as Speaker of the House. It was a call to order.

The interjection came from Mr. Pinder. He choked—coughed—hid his face with the paper—and replaced the utterance by one of a milder character.

"Kit Cotterel, by the Lord!" he cried.

Geraldine drew the paper from his hand. "Oh!" she cried, reading the passage which Mr. Pinder pointed out. "Rosie! Rosie! come, read this."

Rosie took the paper and read it.

"But I don't understand it," she said. "He has never given me the least hint of this kind of work. There must be some mistake."

"How can there be any mistake?" Geraldine asked. "It is perfectly circumstantial. Oh! Denny, come and read this. Come, everybody. Prepare to be astonished. It is about Kit!"

Rosie laughed, incredulous. "It is quite impossible," she said. "Quite, Kit couldn't do it. Unless, perhaps, he was acting."

Geraldine seized the paper and read the paragraph aloud.

[&]quot;'Those who were present at the St. James's Hall last night to hear Mr. Arthur Christopher Cotterel's Lecture on the Future Relations of Capital and Production came away firmly persuaded that, whether the speaker's doctrines are sound or not, a question which we reserve until the publication of the address, here is a man who will have to be reckoned with. It was

no surprise to those present to learn that the two anonymous articles lately published on branches of this great subject in the Contemporary, which have attracted so much attention, are also by him. Mr. Cotterel is a Barrister, a Cambridge man, and a Journalist. We believe that the secret of his studies in sociology and economics has been so well kept by himself, that no one of his many friends has had the least reason to suspect that he has been training himself for a social reformer. The wealth of knowledge and illustration lavished upon these articles would point to extensive travel as well as to enormous reading. It was, therefore, amusing to hear one or two of his friends declaring that his travels were limited to Paris or Brussels, and that his reading must have been carried on in the dead of night; and it is remarkable that a young man who may become another John Stuart Mill, but with a more genial temperament and a warmer feeling for humanity, should have begun by courting notoriety as the writer of light vers de societé, which he was wont to sing, himself, at the club. We note the fact on the testimony of many in the Hall who knew him, and came to hear him out of curiosity, and were expecting a comic entertainment. The address, delivered with faultless eloquence, trained voice, and disciplined gesture, was nothing short of a vehement attack on the existing social systems. To the subject-matter of the discourse, it is probable that we shall have to return again, and seriously. Meantime, the address is to be repeated, and is a thing to be heard."

"Kit Cotterel, by the Lord!" said Mr. Pinder again.

"Oh! I knew—I knew he would do something great, some day!" cried Geraldine, with glistening eyes. "Kit was bound to do something great. Rosie, are you proud?"

"I cannot understand it," said Rosie, looking blankly at the paper. "Only yesterday I had a letter from him, quite in his old style, full of fun and foolishness. And not one word—not a single .word—about this oration! It is impossible. His head must have been full of the subject. It must be some other Kit."

"Some other Kit," said Mr. Pinder. "Without a doubt, some other Kit," he repeated. "Kit Cotterel on the Relations of Capital and Production! As well have Kit Cotterel on the Hittite Tongue!"

"And besides," Rosie added, "Kit has been out of town for three months; so that it cannot be he. Oh, somebody has taken his name. Or it is another Cotterel confused with Kit. A reporter's mistake, or perhaps a reporter's joke."

"It is about three months," said Mr. Pinder, "that he began to fall off at the club. The fellows met him from time to time, and brought back strange stories. He cut everybody dead: he pretended not to know them. Kit seemed anxious to forget all his old friends!"

"What are you talking about?" asked Rosie.
"How could he meet any one? He has been out of town for the last three months. If he has come back, it was only yesterday."

"Well, I met him less than a month ago, and he had bundle of proofs in his hand, and looked mighty important and busy. Other fellows have met him here and there. He may have been living out of town, but he has certainly had to come up pretty often."

"I know nothing more of his movements," said Rosie, coldly.

"And undoubtedly," continued Mr. Pinder, "he has grown serious. Fancy Kit Cotterel serious! Well—I've lived for seventy years, and perhaps I've known even stranger things. When I met him he pretended to have forgotten me. Actually—pretended that!."

"Well," said Rosie, "I dare say he did forget you for the moment. Even Kit can't be always thinking of the club."

"I had to tell him who I was."

"His real friends," interrupted Geraldine, "always knew that he would come out some day. As for his laziness, I have always felt that it was nothing but the collection and the concentration of his powers."

Rosie laughed.

"Oh! Geraldine," she said, "to think of Kit concentrating his power! But I don't understand," she repeated. "What does Kit know or care about Political Economy?"

"I've read the articles," said the man of letters, "and I will say that they are astonishing. One would think the fellow had been all round the world, and had read all the books ever written. I'll never believe in any man again—never!"

"Denny," Geraldine turned to him. Nobody had taken any notice of him. He was standing beside them quite pale. He looked dismayed. "Denny, what do you think?"

"What do I think?"

"Kit has turned over a new leaf. You said he would," said Rosie. "A new leaf! Oh! what does it mean?"

"I do not know—I cannot understand," said Denny. "It is horrible to think of a social reformer: a lecturer: a writer in the *Contemporary*. Good Heavens! What can be done?" For he remembered that yet but a week, and then—— "A new leaf—and what a leaf! Oh! it is intolerable!"

"Well," said Mr. Pinder, "I don't know about that. We are a free country. If Kit likes to turn socialist, or anarchist, or radical reformer, why should it be intolerable?"

"A new leaf!" Denny repeated. "This, at least, one could not expect."

"I think it is delightful," said Geraldine. "Here are all of you, persisting in thinking the man fit only to make light songs and set them to pretty tunes—and I knew all along the great things lying dormant. Oh! I knew he would come to the front some day!"

"Perhaps," said Denny, "he may break down, almost at the outest. Perhaps he will get tired of it, and go back to his club. Let us wait a week—I know Kit. Oh! I venture to prophecy that he will never keep it up."

"Of course he can keep it up," said Geraldine confidently. "If a man can do that kind of thing once, he can go on doing it. Do you suppose that

he has poured the whole contents of his mind into a single article?"

"It's a dreadful disappointment," said the old man. "I looked upon Kit as my natural successor. He had all the symptoms of stopping exactly where he was. Plenty like him, but none so certain, I thought, never to do anything. 'Full of vague ambitions—ambitions to be blown away with the tobacco smoke. But perhaps it won't last. Needy, lazy, and ambitious, he was bound to become my successor."

"Thank you, Mr. Pinder," said Rosie. "We may congratulate ourselves that he is saved from that fate!"

She said this with great severity, and retired from the discussion concerning her lover.

Denny sat down, his chin again in his hand, looking at Mr. Pinder, and wondering that the old man had all this time entertained so strong an opinion and said nothing about it to the person chiefly concerned. The glamor of that dream about the new leaf faded quite away. The page was turned, doubtless, but what was the new page like?

Mr. Pinder went on:

"It's really very wonderful. You all know poor Kit's style—slipshod and careless—eh?"

"Slipshod and careless," Denny echoed. "Always the first rough sketch instead of the finished picture."

"Just so. Well-he has completely changed his

style. Yes—how he's done it I don't know. It is clear as crystal, and polished like marble. A man can change his personal habits; he may take to drink and give it up again; but how he can change his style the Lord only knows. He has changed it, however, somehow. Can the leopard change his spots?"

"In other words," said Geraldine, "Kit has for once in his life—the first time—taken real pains, and shown what he can do. This is the result."

"Yes." The old man looked at her keenly under his white eyebrows. Then he glanced at Rosie, who seemed puzzled, but not proud. "You always believed in him—didn't you? Well, it seems that we have lost Kit Cotterel. He has gone from us—he is lost to us. He has started on the road to name and fame and money. He must already be jingling coins in his pocket. As I said before, I am seventy years of age, and perhaps I have known things happen more wonderful even than this."

"But about the style," asked Denny; "about the style! because that is important."

"My dear sir, you wouldn't know it. Nobody would know it for the same style."

"Oh!" said Denny—and he said no more.

"I thought when I met Kit the other day," continued the Sage, "that a change had come over him. First, he did not see me—that was nothing. Then he did not remember me—that was absence of mind.

But when I asked him to lend me a half-a-sovereign and he refused, I perceived that he was gone—our Kit was gone."

"I think, Mr. Pinder," said Geraldine, "that Kit has already lent his friends too many half-sover-eigns."

"He thought so too, for the first time in his life, and must needs explain his refusal by adding a maxim or two: 'When a man knows he can borrow,' said Kit, the moralist, 'he will not work.' 'When he knows he can borrow,'—confound the puppy! And I always thought he was going to be my successor."

"That Kit should become industrious and turn over a new leaf," said Sophia Gentry, who had been listening in silence, "is conceivable, because Kit is in love, and you really cannot marry on nothing. That Kit should show the possession of unexpected knowledge is not at all wonderful, because he has been reading ever since he left his cradle. But, that Kit should become suddenly a prig and make moral maxims—that, I confess, I cannot understand. And you will allow me to say, Mr. Pinder, that perhaps there may be another way of telling the story."

"'A man who knows he can borrow will not work.'
He heaved that maxim at my head. I can't say more."

An hour after midnight, and the only two left awake in the house were Mr. Pinder and Denny Stirling. They were in the smoking-room, with "materials," and really, as the elder man remarked, considering the comfort of the chairs and the quality of the Scotch, and the late hour, one might almost fancy himself back at the club.

"Now they are all gone to bed we can talk," said the old man. "No house is tolerable till the women are in bed. This Scotch is admirable. I seem to have known you, my boy, all your life, though I've only known you for the last few days. I suppose it's partly because you are so amazingly like Kit—poor beggar! I mean before he went to the Devil and became serious, and began to fling maxims at his best friends."

"I believe I resemble him in many particulars."

"You do—not in your money, nor yet in your appearance; for Kit had no money, and in appearance he was common. Short and fat and, well—common. It is the only word. Quite a common object to look at."

"Quite," said Denny, coloring and grinning. "A pebble by the sea-shore. A paving-stone on the kerb."

"But like him in your ways. Poor old Kit! He's as good as gone. He means to get to the front. Well, I've never been there, but I don't think it can be quite so comfortable as in the back rows. All the people looking at you, and making critical remarks. No. It is more comfortable to sink your

early ambitions, and stay in a back seat." Here he finished his tumbler, and instantly began to tackle the wire of another potash. "I say, my boy, did you observe—well, but did you not—how the two girls took the news to-night?"

- "What two girls?"
- "Why, the girl he is engaged to—and the girl he ought to be engaged to," said Mr. Pinder, with looser grammar than is becoming to a critic.
 - "What do you mean?"

"I've known Kit all his life, and you haven't. The girl that ought to be his wife nearly cried with joy—she's the girl that loves him. The girl that's going to be his wife said she didn't believe it—she doesn't care, you see, whether he's going to be a great man or not. Women are rum cattle—very rum."

Denny got up and walked to the bookcase. When he returned, without a book, his face was very red.

"What are you saying about the girls?"

"I've known Geraldine all her life, and Kit too. Now, if a man must needs get married, and so spoils all the comfort and independence of his life, there's a girl for you!"

"Geraldine seems a very good girl," said Denny,

impartially. .

"She is. And she loves that jackass, Kit, with all her soul and all her strength."

"Nonsense. They have always been together; she takes a real and kindly interest in him."

"She loves him, I tell you. And she's a fool for her pains. First, because he used to be a lazy, good-for-nothing beggar, always promising and never performing. And next, because he has now turned into a prig, who treats his old friends to moral maxims. And, if there's a third reason, it's because he hadn't got the sense to see what a splendid creature she is, and so takes up with that little——"

"Stop! I say," Denny thundered, and brought his fist upon the table so that the glasses jumped for fear.

Mr. Pinder looked at him with wonder. Why this heat?

"What the devil are you flying into a rage for?" asked the old man after a blank stare. "Geraldine isn't in love with you. The other girl isn't engaged to you. Can't a man speak?"

"No, no—only—forgive me—Kit is my old friend, and I can't bear to hear him—and the young lady he is going to marry—talked about in this way. Besides, it is all nonsense. How could Geraldine be in love with him? They were brought up together—they have always been together; they are almost brother and sister."

"Almost, not quite. In these things an inch is as good as a mile. Almost—yes. Why, my friend, I can see it in her eyes. But we will talk no more about it."

"Good-night," said Denny, abruptly rising. "I shall go to bed."

"You are not going to bed yet? Why it isn't one o'clock. Oh, lord! oh, lord! How country habits corrupt one. Fancy being in a house with half-adozen men, and not one of them out of bed after one o'clock. Well, well. Go to bed, my young friend: I shall have one more potash—or two—or three—and go up presently."

Denny went to his own room, but he did not immediately go to bed. He walked about thinking, his mind in a difficulty the like of which had never before happened unto any man. Finally he sat down and wrote a letter:

"My dear Kit,—I have heard a good many surprising things about you to-day. I always knew that you were a lazy beast, and I always suspected, when I could bring my mind to look at things clearly, that you were marked out by Fate for failure, debt, and difficulties. I now hear, to my enormous surprise, that you have in the last three months developed a most surprising change in your habits. You have become, it is said, a total abstainer from the club: you are industrious, and you have made some kind of name. I am also told that you have changed your old style into something quite new, and not in the least like the old. You are further reported to have cut your friends, and to refuse them when they impetrate a loan. All this promises to be exceedingly awkward in the future.

"Now, as the great Return has to be effected next week, would it not be advisable if we had a few days together before that event, so as to learn exactly what has been done on both sides? Otherwise there may be many awkward misunderstandings.

"Come to-morrow, in time for dinner. You will find a house full of friends. The girls are in great force.

"Yours, in the bonds of forgery, imposition, and treachery,
"DENNY STIRLING.

"P.S.—What the devil do you mean by changing your old style—my style?"

CHAPTER V.

KIT'S ARRIVAL.

It was perhaps a pity that Denny forgot to say that he expected Kit; it was certainly a mistake that he did not go to meet him and prepare his mind with the view of avoiding certain accidents which might have been foreseen. But in a situation so unusual, it is difficult to provide against everything.

Unfortunately Denny was entirely occupied with considering this new leaf, turned, not by himself, but by another. Otherwise, he might have given a thought to Rosie.

Now, when the station fly rumbled round the carriage drive, at six o'clock, those who were playing tennis stopped in their game, and those who were talking or walking about desisted and looked up with natural curiosity as to the new comer.

It was quickly seen to be none other than Kit Cotterel himself, the man who had grown suddenly serious and plunged unexpectedly into profound depths of philosophy. He actually looked it. Instead of Kit, smiling and nodding to everybody, as was to be expected, had his approaching visit been known, there was seen sitting well back in the open

carriage, turning his head neither to the right nor left, a perfectly grave person approaching a company of complete strangers. The aspect of Kit, as grave as a bishop, caused the unthinking to shout and laugh. When he got out of the vehicle, instead of running round and shaking hands with everybody, he surveyed the company with face unmoved, and disappeared within the house.

"Goodness gracious!" cried Sophia. "He is playing his new part off the stage. Surely he need not pretend to be so absorbed in meditation as actually not to know us. His eyes fell upon me, and showed not the least recognition. Geraldine, my dear, am I grown young and beautiful again, for a miracle, so that I am no longer recognized?"

"You are always young and always beautiful," said Geraldine. "Kit is certainly full of thought. I never knew him like this before."

"My dear, I feel as if a jug of cold water had been pouled down my back. We are too frivolous to be recognized. But we shall see him presently, I suppose; and perhaps he will unbend a little. He will not descend quite to the old frivolity, of course; but he will come down a little."

Kit was taken straight to the library, where Denny awaited him. The young men shook hands; but with a certain constraint,—a little suspicion, or, at least, jealousy, because each had to give an account of his stewardship. "You are looking very well," said Denny. "I think I have never seen you looking better. And of course I ought to know. I hope you find the—the quarters comfortable. They are more roomy than the old ones, though somewhat lower. I suppose you found the increase of capacity round the chest a little strange at first. The thickness of the legs would not trouble you much, nor a certain loss of straightness in those limbs: you find your foothold firmer; and—from certain symptoms—I should say that you found a healthier appreciation of drinks. Indeed, I sincerely hope you have been quite comfortable."

"Perfectly, perfectly: I am quite satisfied with the accommodation. And you?"

"I have been very well, thanks. I was rather too tall at first, and found I knocked my hat about a good deal under the trees. And there was a little difficulty in persuading the organs to adapt themselves to certain habits requiring stronger action. I need only hint that you will find yourself capable of much more wine and Scotch whiskey than before."

"Quite unnecessary," said Kit with some severity.

"No excess, you know; only good cheer and a healthy appetite. You are stouter, I think, in consequence. As for you, I think that you have fined down the lines somewhat. Face and figure alike are thinner. But that may be considered—by some—an improvement."

"It is certainly an improvement. A complete change in the habits of life has produced the effect."

"Well—well—one can easily go back again. No great harm done, old man."

"Quite the contrary. You used to sit up half the night smoking more tobacco than was good for you, and drinking a ridiculous quantity of stuff. How could you expect any work to be done with such habits as those? I do not smoke at all, and I go to bed by eleven."

Denny laughed derisively.

"When I took up my residence," Kit continued, "in these lodgings, the hand shook and there was a strong desire for drink every morning."

"There certainly was. But a single little whiskey and soda, first thing in the morning, used to set that right."

"Those symptoms are now quite gone. There is no more need for a whiskey and soda at any time."

"Oh—well—I suppose it's an improvement," said Denny doubtfully. "What do they say at the club?"

"I do not know. I have left off going to the club."

"Left off going to the club! What can they think? But, perhaps it is as well, considering."

"The men, I found, are accustomed to drink at odd times all through the day, and their conversation, though they are mostly literary men, seemed to me extremely unprofitable — all froth and sparkle."

"What more do you want? Froth and sparkle? Where else, I should like to know, can you get froth and sparkle?"

"In fact, I found that your former associates—"
He paused, as one who does not wish to inflict needless pain.

"Are they not good enough for you?"

"Quite—quite. It was not a question of goodness. They are, I dare say, very good fellows—very worthy creatures indeed. But when one has to work—you see."

"I hope to Heaven you did not tell them this."

"There was no necessity. I simply stayed away. I had my work to do."

"Yes. Somehow I always found time for the club. I suppose I never had any work to do."

"I gathered from the Editors to whom you were known, that there is always plenty of work for those who are willing and really able to do it. I found that my—your—reputation was that of a man able to turn out light and airy stuff—pleasant for the moment—when he could screw himself up to the point of work. I assured the Editors that their view was a narrow one, and I brought them work of a very different kind. You will, I assure you, find yourself in a vastly improved position. You will never again be expected to write frivolous verse."

"Oh!"

"Yes. And more than that: you have become an orator."

"So I hear."

"And a champion of the greatest cause ever advanced—nothing less than a complete reconstruction of Society on a basis which I have elaborated after years of investigation——"

"Don't!—— Thank you very much; but give it out in smaller doses—break it gently!"

"To return, then, to your new habits. I rise every morning at six, and get two solid hours of work before breakfast. After breakfast a sharp walk and then more work until one, when I take a little light lunch."

"A light lunch." Denny laughed. "Man, I used to take a solid steak and a pint of beer, with a pipe or two after it. A light lunch! Why, there is no meal in the day more delightful than a good solid lunch, with a clear run of tobacco and talk after it, till dinner time."

"A sandwich and a glass of Apollinaris," said Kit, "something that will not interfere with work. Then one goes on for an hour or so, after which it is time to go and see my Editor and talk over a subject. If I am to write a leader, I go away and set about it. I can generally get it done by eight—fortunately I am a quick writer. Then, of course, I have some dinner and go home. It is a good day's work, I

think," he added modestly. "After that I merely make a few notes, look up a reference or two, and so to bed by eleven."

"Good Heavens! What a life! Why, it is all work—all work. It isn't life—there is no life in it."

"Don't be ungrateful. Consider what I have done for you. In three months—three short months—I have raised you from an occasional contributor of light articles and verses of Cockney-land to a leader-writer on a great daily. Instead of doing a review occasionally, when you could get it, for a weekly, and a poem now and then for a comic journal, you now discuss in the best magazines of the day the Condition of the People and Social Economics."

"What do I know—what do I care—about the condition of the people?"

"You can read what I have written, which will guide you, and then you must hasten to get up all the information you can find upon the subject."

Denny smote his forehead, and groaned aloud.

"You have perhaps heard of the papers in the Contemporary—they have attracted universal attention. You have proven yourself a new authority in such subjects," Kit replied sternly. "You must therefore read them up. I have laid, in fact, the foundation of a splendid reputation for you, not to speak of fortune."

"And you've gone and changed my style," groaned Denny.

"Yes. It was formerly unfinished. Cleverness in it, I dare say, but sketchy and unfinished. You will find it improved, but, of course, you will have to write up to your new level."

"Thanks," said Denny, grinning unmirthfully.

"You have been exceedingly kind. Have you, may I ask, enjoyed making all this mischief?"

"Very much, indeed." Kit's face lit up; he became once more almost like the old Kit. "To wake in the morning with the consciousness that only a day lies between yourself and destitution: to feel that you have got the work to do which will stave it off, and that you can do it and do it well, really was the most inspiriting thing I ever felt."

"Pity you cannot continue to feel inspirited. As for me——"

"The heights where working-men live have a bracing air. And the food which one actually earns how good it is!"

"Glad you like it. I have been eating for three weeks much finer food than any I have ever earned."

"When I began, with about fifteen shillings in my pocket, there were five weeks' bills unpaid to the landlady——"

"More, I should have thought. But you know best. How has she behaved about it?"

"And the table was littered with accounts unpaid,"

"People do get troublesome sometimes. You didn't let them worry you, I hope?"

"Worry me? I had no ease of mind until I had paid them all—every one."

"Paid them all? Paid my debts? You? How the deuce did you manage that?"

"In the usual way. You do not suppose that I worked for nothing. After all, the bills taken together did not amount to much."

"No. One blushes, certainly, to think how small is the confidence, how limited the credit, of the individual. Even at the club there is no tick, and they won't cash cheques. But is it true? Am I really square?"

"I believe so, unless there is something behind."

"My dear fellow, there couldn't be anything behind. My creditors are not the sort to allow anything behind. Well, I shall feel a little strange, at first—cold—without the friendly interest of my creditors, who will make no more kind inquiries after my progress. This is bad for them, as well as for me. And think, besides, of the mischief you have probably done to them, in setting them an example of payment. They are worthy people, with wives and children. Lulled into security—enticed into trustfulness—by the payment of those bills, they will now go on blindly extending their confidence, until they have granted unlimited tick to the whole club. It may even prove a national disaster that you have brought upon the town."

Kit heard without a smile.

"It was my clear duty," he said, severely, "to pay your debts. A man in debt is nothing better than a slave. Until the debts were paid, I confess that I sneaked in and out of the house like a thief. I did not dare to face the woman of the house. I trembled, for fear of her just reproaches."

"I am out of debt, then. I wonder how long it will last? And money, perhaps, in your pocket?"

"You will find an account opened at the bank: this is something thin—say, fifty pounds or so. There are also two or three papers as yet unpaid for."

"Fifty pounds? Good heavens! Fifty pounds all at one time! I shall draw it out in golden sovereigns, and look at them. Fifty pounds!"

Kit shrugged his shoulders.

"Don't forget, if you please," he said, "that you have a character to lose, thanks to me."

"I feel grateful. As soon as I have lost it, I shall be more grateful still."

"You look as if you were not pleased with what I have done for you. Why, man, I have given you what you always declared was the whole object and aim of your life. I have given you literary success."

"And you've changed my style."

"Just so."

"And made a reputation for me. Well, that won't last long. I shall look like a fool for a month or two, and then . . . After all, I've had a splendid

time. It is worth something to have had such a time. And when you talk of character—"

"Well, what have you been doing?"

Denny sat down, and laughed.

"When you know the whole, you will be pleased indeed. You have kept a lovely open house here. No end of deserving young people in distressed circumstances have been having a high old time. There have been feasting, dancing, singing, play-acting, picnics, love-making, and universal happiness for three months."

"And now they will have to go back again to their humble work, and be made discontented for life."

"They were discontented before. I've done more. I've sent boys and girls to the seaside by the hundreds, every one for a fortnight at a time. I've sent money to all kinds of Institutions: but you will find out when you come back."

"You have, in short," interposed Kit angrily, "turned the money to the most mischievous purpose possible. Every foolish gift or thing people wish to have, only makes them forget that what they want they must work for."

"If you had to work, my dear fellow-"

"I have had to work for three months, and it's the healthiest time I have ever had."

"To be sure, I forgot. Well, that is what I have done. I have increased the happiness of hundreds

by giving them something pleasant to remember. And, as for you, I have created for you a character for general benevolence and good-nature, which you will find, I take it, as pleasant as it is unexpected."

"Benevolence! I hate the very name. There ought to be no such thing as benevolence. Well, go on."

"No, my dear friend. I will not go on. Meantime, you will meet your friends, these girls and people, at dinner."

"I thought," said Kit, in agitation, "that you would only spend the money on your own amusements."

"And I thought you would just pawn my watch, and borrow half-severeigns, and get on anyhow."

"It is absurd. I suppose these girls and people all belong to the unsuccessful tribe?"

"They are unsuccessful and hard-up, every one."

"Unsuccessful, because they are incompetent or lazy. To give them things they cannot earn will not help them to work any better. The more the present incompetents suffer, the more will future incompetents be prevented. And for me—me—to pose as the friend of helplessness!"

"Yes; because it is helplessness. Just that. Well, my friend, you have presumed to change my style. Upon my word it seems tit for tat—I have certainly changed yours. You will have even a harder task before you than I."

"I shall. I was a fool not to have guarded against this."

"Perhaps you were. That reflection brings me comfort. I've had a glorious time, too. To wake up in the morning with the thought that there is no work to be done but to enjoy yourself: and if you think of any one in trouble, all you've got to do is to help him out of it. Why, it's godlike. It brings out a warm glow all over. Only a few days more, and I go back to the life which you have poisoned with your confounded activity."

"And I to the life which you have ruined by your abominable benevolence."

They stood facing each other, hands in pocket, chins stuck out, snorting a kind of defiance.

"Take care," said Denny. "Fair words, my friend. There are still a few days left. Still time left to pauperize half London. Serve you right, too, for changing my style."

"If you come to that, there is time to engage you for half a dozen more articles, which you will not be able to write. You and your confounded benevolence! What right had you——"

They snorted again, and glared at each other with such sudden boiling-over of wrath as, in the old days, would have impelled them to rush at each other with any weapon handy, such as a chair—which was beautiful either for defence or offence,—or a poker or an umbrella—the article was formerly

made strong for the purpose,—or even with fists and feet. Next day they might have had a duel, or they might not, according to the courage of the assaulted party. This uncertainty lent additional attraction to the fight. Now that there are no duels there is no fighting, and though young men sometimes quarrel, their wrath is left a half-completed tale. The cheeks of these two, however, were red, their eyes flamed, their lips were parted and their nostrils dilated, just as if they were actually going to fight.

How the situation would have ended I know not. I fear, however, that it would have ended tamely, with a walk off in opposite directions. But at this moment a diversion was effected of a most surprising and unforeseen character, which altered, suddenly and completely, the whole situation.

CHAPTER VI.

THE UNEXPECTED.

For at this moment the door flew open and Rosie appeared.

"Kit!" she cried. "Oh! you have actually come, and without letting me know you were coming!"

There was nearly the whole length of the library between them. She came flying down the room, her eyes bright, her lips parted, her cheeks glowing, the sunniest, joyfullest, lovingest greeting on her brow, her hands outstretched, a welcome in every line of her slight and dainty figure. What lover in all the world but would have rushed to meet her, and to enfold in his manly arms so sweet a girl?

Alas! There could be but one. Denny, it is true, turned quickly, as if he was the welcomed lover: he checked himself, however, blushing a violent brickred; and as for Kit, he looked round with lack-lustre eyes, and made no movement at all—not a step, not a word, not a sign of greeting.

Nobody has ever seen such a thing, except, of course, at rehearsals, where if something goes wrong in the love scene, the lover and the maiden alike have to let the lovelight die suddenly out of their faces, to drop their passionate arms, and to stand aside till the point has been settled. But this was no rehearsal: this was a scene in the real Comedy of a Woman's Life. Rosie caught the dull, stupid look, void of recognition: the light and joy suddenly vanished from her face: her hands dropped: she stood quite still, wonder-stricken.

For her lover's face plainly asked—Who is this girl? I do not know her.

"Kit!" she cried, "what is the matter?"

Kit looked from her to Denny and back again. But he replied never a word.

"Kit! Kit! what is it?"

She shrank back as if she had received a blow.

"Pull yourself together, man!" cried Denny, roughly taking him by the shoulders and shaking him. "Are you only half awake? You will excuse a him directly, Rosie," he said. "It is only a momentary weakness." It might have occurred to Rosie that to shake a man violently by the shoulder is unwise treatment for momentary weakness. "Wake up, Kit! Can't you see that it is Rosie—Rosie Romaine?"

"Oh! yes-yes-Miss Romaine, of course."

"Is he ill? Oh! Mr. Stirling—Denny—what in the world has happened to him?"

"I don't know. Man! don't go off again."

"I am broad awake, thank you. Nothing has

happened," Kit said, coldly and slowly, with vengeful face turned to the other.

"There, again—you can't have forgotten!" cried Denny. "Pull yourself together, I say."

"No—no—certainly not. Pray forgive me—Miss Romaine."

Denny whispered something in his ear—something short and strong—but the girl heard it.

"I think I had better go," she said. "I am sorry I came at all. You seem to have been drinking, Kit, or you are gone mad—one of the two—and whichever it is——!"

"No—no—" (for now he perceived that he had really made some stupendous blunder)—"I am not mad—nor am I drunk—I assure you. The fact is——" he turned to Denny for support or explanation. "Help me out, can't you;" he cried in desperation. "You have got me into the mess—help me out!"

"Help him out!" cried Rosie. "What does he mean? what can he mean?"

"Yes—yes," said Denny. "It is my fault. He arrived tired and overcome—I ought to have insisted on his taking rest—or a drink—or something. Instead of that—I am a blundering idiot, I confess—I brought him here to talk over business—and in our discussion—he has been greatly over-worked, which I ought to have known—only last night we were talking about it—you remember, Rosie. The papers

in the Contemporary, you know, and the speeches about the new thingumbob—you remember—and a great deal more that we did not know—change of style—a thing by itself that would kill most men—break up with old associates——"

He paused, partly out of breath and partly for lack of invention. The most experienced inventor often has to consider what next.

"Pray go on," said Rosie, looking at her shamestricken lover. "He has worked so hard that he has forgotten the girl who promised to marry him wonderful effect of hard work, truly!"

"No—no—no, you misunderstand," said Denny.
"What I was coming to was this, that while we were discussing a certain point we disagreed—disagreed—you know, in the heat of argument people frequently disagree."

"Otherwise, I suppose, they would not argue. But go on, pray. You are rather long in coming to the point."

"Well, we quarrelled—I am ashamed to say we quarrelled—and——"

"And so he forgets his friends!"

"And all of a sudden Kit fell down in a fit. I had just picked him up when you came in. He was slowly recovering consciousness—of course he didn't know you. But he is better—you are much better, Kit, now—are you not? Eh? steady—steady." He seized his friend by the waist as if he was going off

again—and pinched him in the fattest and tenderest part of the arm—so that he jumped. "Shake hands with her," he whispered—but the girl heard again. "Call her Rosie."

"Pray forgive me—Rosie," said Kit, coldly extending an uncertain hand while his face still betrayed an utter absence of recognition.

She refused his hand with a gesture of indignation.

- "Is he somebody else?" she asked.
- "I should have thought so myself," Denny replied, "if it hadn't been for that fit. Don't hurry him. He will come to himself again presently. Don't hurry him."
 - "How could he actually forget me?"
- "Such a fit—it is of uncommon occurrence, and only comes to people when they have worked too hard—is sufficient to account for anything."
- "I am remembering again," said Kit, lending a hand at last. "Have I been saying anything foolish?"
 - "Let me look at you, Kit," said the girl.
- "Oh! you are very far from remembering yet. I should say, from you manner, that you have been drinking. That is my explanation—and if so——"
 - "No-no-I never drink."
- "He never drinks—now." Denny still interpreted.

 "Formerly he had a praiseworthy swallow—now he never drinks. We must forget this painful incident.

 Lay the blame on me. The nervous system is easily shaken, and once out of gear—you know——"

"He is as strong as a bull," said the girl. "He is out of this mysterious fit—now, at any rate—and look at him. Why, he doesn't know me yet. Kit—Kit—Mr. Arthur Christopher Cotterel—are you clean out of your senses?"

"No—no—I shall be all right presently—not to know you—Miss Romaine—Rosie——"

"Miss Romaine? again. Oh! it is too ridiculous. You are playing with me, sir."

"No-no," he murmured.

"I assure you," said Denny, "that what has happened——"

"I want his explanation, Denny, not yours," said the girl. "Why, he looks at me still as if he wondered who I am. Let me refresh your memory, sir. I am Rosie Romaine and I live at Chelsea, and I am a painter—a water-color painter—and you, after assuring me that you were in love with me, made me promise to marry you. I have had letters every other day from you for the last three months: one came yesterday morning, in which you said absolutely nothing about coming here. Now—have you anything further to say? Do not help him, Denny, if you please, to make up anything. Let him speak."

"No," said Denny. "Let him keep silence till he has recovered."

"Well, I will leave him. To stay with him in his present condition is impossible. Understand, sir, that I must have from yourself, and not from Denny

or any other friend, an explanation of this—this outrage."

"Yes," Denny murmured in wrath irrepressible.

"It is an outrage—it is nothing short of an outrage."

"Then, sir,"—she continued to address her lover who stood with hanging head, not daring to say a word,—"when you are able to talk rationally, I shall be ready to listen. Till then——"

She turned and swept out of the room with the dignity of an offended Queen-but with trembling lips. When she reached her own room, and not till she had shut and bolted the door she sat down to cry. Kit loved her no longer—that was certain: his face, his eyes, his words, his manner—all showed he had actually clean forgotten her. Was ever girl more cruelly insulted? And from her pocket she drew her last letter in the dear old handwritingwith the dear old phrases—ending with the dear old words, "I love you-I love you-I love you." Oh! the fond lover! and the next day he had forgotten He must be ill—something terrible—some sudden shock must have happened. But her heart presently softened. Kit could never have behaved in such a strange manner unless he was suffering from something—never—it wasn't possible. She would wait and hear what he had to say.

"Confound it all!" cried Denny, stamping his foot, when she was gone. "This is the most unlucky

chance—the most frightful accident—that could have happened. Couldn't you see, man? How on earth . . . Here's a girl comes rushing into the room with her arms out and calls you by your Christian name, and you stare at her like a blank idiot——"

"Who is she? How was I to know?"

"Why, you donkey, you are engaged to her!"

"Engaged to her? So, I now understand. Well, you ought to have told me before I came. It is all your fault."

"Engaged—now you see what you've done. You've made me look as if I'd forgotten my own sweetheart. That's all—forgotten my girl—the sweetest and most lovable little girl that ever lived. That's all! Great heavens! That's all!"

"Well, why didn't you tell me?" Kit repeated stolidly.

"Because I wasn't going to have you going about in my shape to make love to her."

"Well, then, why did you send for me here?"

"I forgot what might happen. I do forget sometimes. It's the awkwardness of this business that one has to be always remembering, and guarding against things."

"Well, the only question now is, What is to be done?"

"I don't know. Make up something. Go on having giddy fits. Be over-worked. Go on being giddy. Reel about. Stagger."

"I will do what I can," Kit replied gravely. "The situation is delicate, I confess."

"Delicate or not, you have got to get out of it, somehow. Mind, you must—you must—you must."

"Am I to make love to her? I don't want to; but if you think I ought——"

"I suppose"—Denny changed color—"I suppose you must—to a certain extent—pretend. There will be a row royal in any case. Perhaps it would be better to let things slide till this week is over. But she won't allow it. She means to have it out at once. Well, I suppose," he concluded, doubtfully, "that you must make love."

"Oh!" Kit looked more doubtful still. "I don't like to ask impertinent questions, my dear fellow—but in these matters—want of experience . . . One would like to know how far one may go—what is expected and allowed."

"Here's a chap!" cried Denny. "One would think he had never made love to a girl in his life. Oh! I would get up and confess the whole business if I thought she would believe it. But she wouldn't. She would think it was a put-up job. No woman would ever be got to believe it."

"After all, it's only a lovers' quarrel. She'll make it up and come round fast enough, when we've had a little explanation. I shall tell her about that fit again."

"Will she come round? If I know that sweet

girl, it won't be quite so easy. Hang it all! not to recognize your own girl—and, mind,—she doesn't believe in that fit. She thinks you are drunk—I saw it in her eyes. She didn't believe a word about the fit from the beginning."

"Well, I will do what I can. Of course I must call her by her Christian name—Rosie? Who is Rosie? How long have I been engaged? Tell me all and make haste about it. A very pretty interruption to work this job promises to be."

"And mind," said Denny after impressing these and other points upon him, "the house is full of your old friends. Don't pretend not to know them. Don't be standoffish with them, because they don't expect such treatment, and they won't have it, and they'll visit it upon me next week if they get it now."

- "Well, tell me beforehand who they are."
- "There's dear old Sophia Gentry, the painter."
- "Never heard of her."
- "Well then, pretend to have heard of her—shake hands warmly with her. You may kiss her, if you like. I think, indeed, she will expect it. Everybody kisses Sophia."
 - "I don't want to kiss her."
- "There's Geraldine—tall, good-looking girl—remember you've been friends from childhood. She'll want a little private talk—and you must tell her everything. But you mustn't try to kiss her, because she isn't that kind of girl at all—even with

her oldest friends. Well, then there's old Pinder, to whom you refused the loan of half-a-sovereign the other day. You'll find him rather distant in consequence."

"A disagreeable-looking old man with a red face and a loud voice? I remember him. No—I should certainly not lend that man anything."

"Well, then there are others—mind you laugh as if you were glad to see them. Oh! and as for Rosie—But it is too late for you to explain anything before dinner. You will sit next to her, and you had better sigh and let her understand that you are getting slowly better. Don't drink anything but Apollinaris. That'll convince her, if anything can, how ill you have been. Kit Cotterel must be very far gone indeed when he lets the champagne pass him—or the claret either—or the port—or the sherry. Oh! Lord—Lord! how shall I ever make it up with Rosie! Poor child! Poor child!"

CHAPTER VII.

WHAT HAS COME TO HIM?

KIT obeyed his instructions in so far that he came down to dinner late—so late, that they did not wait for him. He dropped into his place, which was next to Rosie on one side and to Sophia on the other, with a smile and a bow to the latter—who took his hand and held it affectionately.

"My dear boy," she murmured, "we are all so proud of you. I must learn all about it after dinner."

But there was something in his manner which chilled her, and she dropped his hand, looking at him with surprise. The others all welcomed him as "Kit the Philosopher—Kit the Preacher—Kit the Moralist," laughing as if the new character was a really excellent joke. He laughed in reply, but coldly, as one who would be taken seriously. But Mr. Pinder regarded him with offended dignity. As for Rosie, she addressed not one word to him, but conversed with animation with the man on the other side. This was remarked naturally. Again, it was remarked that Kit not only told no stories, but laughed at none. Nothing could be a greater proof

of radical change in him than the fact that he neither told stories nor laughed at them. Finally, if more proof was wanted of his changed condition, it was observed that he drank nothing. A small bottle of Apollinaris stood before him, which he did not finish. The sparkling wine and the claret he refused.

"Kit," said Sophia, "you have grown silent. Can you not leave London and your work behind you?"

"I have brought my work with me."

"Oh, but you must rest and take a holiday."

"I have a good deal to finish within the next three days. After that, I cannot tell"—he sighed—"how much holiday I may take."

"Well, Kit—but we are not always working. Not at dinner, for instance. Where are your old spirits? Where are your stories? Why are you so stiff with your old friends?"

"Am I stiff? Indeed, I am sorry."

"Look at Denny. You seem to have given him all your spirits when you gave him your songs?"

"Perhaps I did. Don't you see that when one's mind is occupied with really serious things, it is impossible to be always laughing and telling stories?"

"In your case," said Sophia dryly, "it would seem so. But you should not fall into the opposite extreme. There is such a thing, my dear Kit, as a wet blanket."

In fact, although Denny did his best to keep up a cheerful flow of talk, there was a shadow upon the table caused by the presence of this transformed butterfly, who was now a Philosopher. From grub to butterfly we know, but not from butterfly to grub.

But when they went into the drawing-room the shadow seemed for the moment removed. They all except Rosie, flocked round Kit. "Oh, Kit!" cried one. "Come, Kit!" cried another. "Now, Kit," cried a third, "sit down and sing one of your old songs. Denny sings them all, and so exactly like you, that we want to know which sings them the better. One of your old songs, Kit."

They led him, passive, to the piano, and made him sit down on the music-stool before he had time to refuse. He even went so far as to touch the keys with his fingers, then he started up—remembering that he could not play or sing a note—not even after the manner of the young man who lives next door to everybody in all the suburbs of all the towns, and interprets the finest music with softness, color, and sympathy by the aid of the forefinger alone.

They all burst out laughing. This, indeed, was about as bold and impudent a falsehood as was ever uttered. Why, the man was bubbling over with music of the soft and sentimental kind; of the Bac-

[&]quot;No," he said—"not to-night."

[&]quot;Oh! yes-you must-you must. Ask him, Rosie."

[&]quot;If you cannot make him, I cannot," said Rosie, coldly.

[&]quot;I neither play nor sing at all," he said blankly.

chanalian kind, or of the love kind—willingly at all times would Kit sit down to sing hymns, Ancient and Modern in praise of Venus or of Bacchus-of love and wine. And as he sang, his light voice rolling above the rippling of the notes, his face would shine and beam, and his lips would so laugh and he would be so happy in the exercise of his power, that everybody loved him. And Denny behaved in exactly the same manner with equal enjoyment and equal command of the instrument, and with the same laughing eyes, so that the people were divided in opinion which of them played and sang the better. Mostly they found a superior delivery in Denny's rendering, and some thought that he played with greater finish. I believe that the superiority was due to personal comeliness, in which point, without doubt, Denny had the advantage. And if only for his singing, Denny was now as popular as Kit had been. No young man is so universally beloved, as he who can play and sing with ease and freedom, and as if he enjoyed it himself as much as his Witness the popularity of Mr. Corney hearers. Grain, who really must enjoy his own singing and playing, just as much as the people whose mouths he keeps open and whose eyes he keeps dancing.

"I cannot play," he repeated, without laughing,—
"I mean I cannot play to-night. I have no voice—
and I—I had a little indisposition—a giddy fit—
after I arrived this evening: "—he looked toward

Rosie, who cruelly kept her face averted—"and, in fact, I must not attempt any music to-night."

"He has had an upset of some kind," said Sophia, "that is very certain."

"No—no," said Denny, "of course he must not play or sing to-night. Rest for a few days is what he wants. Don't think, Kit, of trying to sing. Next week, as much as you please. I'll sing you a song—one of your own songs, Kit—written before you began to instruct the world from the pages of the Contemporary."

He sat down and ran his fingers over the keys lightly and pleasantly—this preliminary touch of the fingers is like the kiss of two lovers—and then he sang.

"It is exactly as Kit himself used, to-night," said Sophia Gentry. "I have heard him sing that song a dozen times. Denny, have you no style of your own?"

"No, only a variation here and there of Kit's. You don't mind, Kit, do you? You wouldn't like your style changed—would you? Not even to be improved?"

"Kit," whispered Vernon Cheviot, "is it really true that you have gone serious, and taken to work?"

"So far, it is really true," he replied.

"And is there to be no more fun at all? Mr. Pinder says the old Kit is gone—never to come back. Can that be true?"

"I do not know—how can I foretell what will happen? It is true that I have been working pretty hard of late, and I hope that I shall continue to work. It seems to me that I have played long enough."

"Oh! Kit—to hear you talk about playing long enough! Why, how many times have you declared that play is the only serious business of life? Denny thinks so. And then in the song you wrote:

'Life is long to those who toil not, Only long—to those who play.'

"I dare say Denny thinks so," Kit replied, so coldly that the girl said no more. "I do not—any longer."

Then Mr. Pinder bore down upon him with the demand for an explanation written plainly on his face.

"We haven't seen you lately at the club," he began.

"No—I have been too much occupied of late to spare the time. I cannot waste my time, as some men do, in idle talking at the club."

"It is a great pity, sir, let me tell you," said Mr. Pinder, savagely, "when young men give up habits of good fellowship, and pretend that work is the only thing for which they were brought into the world. A very great pity, sir, let me tell you."

He retired without asking, or obtaining, any more explanation. But this kind of talk does not promote cheerfulness. There fell a constraint upon the party.

The people looked at Kit with increasing wonder. It was a miracle. Like all miracles, it would not last long. Presently, they thought, he would change again into his old self: he would sit down and begin tinkling the piano and singing one of the songs for which he was so famous. It was not in Kit's nature to keep serious very long. They would wait.

Nobody said these things, but everybody thought them. One of them, however—Geraldine—took him quite seriously.

She sat down beside him when he had extricated himself from those who wished him to sing, and began talking to him in a confidential voice—not a whisper, but a low tone which is not intended for the whole world to hear. A young lady can only talk so to a man if she is a very old and intimate friend, almost a sister.

"Kit," she said, "tell me truly—is it a settled change of purpose, or only a passing fancy?"

"It has been settled for three months," he replied.

"If it will last another week, I should say that it will always continue. You know"—he smiled gravely—

"there are crises and dangerous points in everything—we are now on the verge of a very important crisis indeed."

"Your look is settled, Kit: your eyes are grave. These are very good signs. Oh! you are so very right. It was indeed time to throw off the indolent trifling which affected your friends so much. Life cannot be all singing and telling stories. But you must not give up singing altogether, for the sake of those who love to hear you."

"I shall sing again in a few days, I dare say."

"After the crisis is weathered? And what does Rosie say?"

"She finds me changed," he said shortly.

"Why, so do all of us. Of course you are changed, but for the better. We are proud of you, remember that—ten times as proud of you as when you thought it the finest thing in the world to go to the club and sing your songs to the men there."

At this moment Denny began to sing another of the ditties. Truth to tell, the lines of the ditty had just a little touch of the music-hall about them, and there was a tag or refrain which also suggested that Institution for the formation of national taste.

"No, Kit," said Geraldine, "I was wrong. You must give up singing these songs: they would be incongruous for you henceforward. A man who writes on such subjects and in such a style—a man who addresses crowded audiences on grave and important questions—cannot sing those songs any more. Promise me to sing them no more."

"Ask me next week; I cannot promise anything just now."

"Let Denny go on singing them: they suit his light and sparkling character. He is like a bottle of champagne, so full of life and spirit. But they suit

you no longer. The songs seem part of him; he is of a disposition so sunny, so generous, and so—so like what you wished formerly to seem, Kit. The verses are all about happiness and sunshine and feasting: they suit a man like him, who is so rich and has no sense of responsibility: he laughs at effort: if he sees suffering, he relieves it on the spot: and he is quite as lazy as ever you were, Kit."

"Or ever will be again," he replied, smiling.

This young lady, he now perceived, was an extremely beautiful girl, quite unlike the pretty little creature upon whom his clumsy hoofs had trampled. She was tall and stately: she possessed a countenance of great beauty, set and serious. She sat close beside him and talked with a sisterly affection and sympathy, very delightful to any young man, particularly to one who has never seen or spoken to her before.

"I wanted to speak to you as soon as I could, Kit. I wanted to come directly after Rosie, you know, just to tell you how happy the change has made me. Oh! I have been waiting so long, looking for the Kit of the old days, the brave boy who was filled with noble ambition and lofty ideals, and nourished with the greatest thoughts and words of the greatest men. I knew very well that he would come back to us some day. Such a boy might wander out of the way; he might stay down below in the valleys for a while, but he would be sure to climb upon the moun-

tains again. I waited, and I had patience, because I was so certain that he would come back to his old dreams."

Kit murmured something. The girl's deep eyes spoke volumes of joy and gratitude for the return of the Prodigal.

- "The frivolous, idle dreamer, the indolent Kit of the last five years, has quite gone, has he not? Quite, quite gone. Never to return——"
- "I cannot say; ask me again in a few days, in a week."
- "When this terrible crisis shall have passed? But, remember, you have always told me everything."
- "It is so long," he murmured, "since we have known each other, is it not?"
- "Why, Kit, all our lives we have played and talked together—since I was a little girl of three and you a boy of eight."
- "Yes, so long—so long. We are such old friends, Geraldine. I fear—I tremble——"
 - "Why?"
- "I fear that the frivolous idler and dreamer may return. In a few days you may see him back again."
- "Be true to yourself, Kit, and this can never happen."

He shook his head.

"I tremble," he said, "Geraldine, even with you at my side—."

"With me at your side? But you always have that, if you choose—and, besides, you have Rosie."

There was not the smallest touch of suspicion or jealousy in her voice. She meant what she said:

"You love Rosie: she will make you happy."

"Even if I had you," he added, with a look of admiration in his eyes that had never belonged to the old Kit. Indeed, in these old boy and girl confidences there never is any admiration on the part of the boy, though there may be plenty of worship on the part of the man. "Even if you were always at my side, I should tremble to think what might happen. Because, you see, what I have done has now advanced to a stage where a strong man is required; and I know not whether I have the strength, the conrage, or the perseverance to continue the work."

"There is a touch of Kit the dreamer—not Kit the man of action. Strength? You are full of strength. Nobody knows your intellectual strength better than I do. There is nothing, Kit—nothing in the world—that you cannot do, if you only choose."

Denny interrupted them.

"Rosie is in the library," he said. "Will you go to her, Kit?"

He administered a warning frown, as Kit rose quickly and departed.

"What is the matter with them, Denny?" asked Geraldine. "Everybody noticed that they hardly spoke to each other during dinner." "Rosie came running into the library at a most unfortunate moment. Kit, you see, was over-heated, or overdone, or something, and he had a sudden giddiness—nearly fell over—had to sit down—kind of fit."

"Kind of fit? That seems alarming. Kit never had such a thing before."

"No? Comes of hard work—that kind of fit. These articles, you know. Well, Rosie came at the moment when he was just recovering. And, in fact, for the moment he did not recognize her—seemed not to know who she was—and she was a little put out; thought it was neglect. Now he's gone to make it up with her. Five minutes will square it. Lord! they've had a hundred quarrels. She was always flying out at him for laziness and debts and late hours. And they always kissed and made friends again. I'll give Kit ten minutes to make it right."

CHAPTER VIII.

LET ME EXPLAIN.

- "Now sir," said Rosie, tapping her foot impatiently.
 - "You saw what happened," he began.
- "Saw what happened? Of course I did. Saw what happened? Pray, sip, if you knock a man down with a bludgeon, do you begin your apologies by asking him if he felt what happened?"
- "Please let me go on. I am all impatience, Rosie, to set this matter straight."
- "Go on." She turned her head aside as if she could not bear even to look at him. She was in a tempestuous mood, which Kit's strange behavior about the singing had not gone far to calm.
- "I was going to say that when you came into the room—I was not, for the moment, myself.
- "That you need not tell me. The question is how long it will be before you are again yourself?"
- "I am now—again—myself," he replied; but with a faltering voice, because he felt that the statement would hardly bear defence.
 - "No, Mr. Cotterel, you are not. And until you

can make me understand what this means—what is the reason of this conduct——"

"Indeed, I do not know in what words to assure you of my sorrow and pain—at what must, I own, seem incomprehensible——"

"Sir—you only make things worse." She drew herself up and spoke in the iciest tones. "You now say that you have come to your senses, and that you know at last the girl to whom you are engaged. You recognize her again. Why, it is I now who do not know you. Where are you gone? What has become of you? What evil spirit possesses you? Why do you speak to me like this?"

He made no reply.

"Have you any complaint to make of me? Have I offended you in any way? If so, it must be since the day before yesterday when I received your last letter. Here it is." She drew a letter from her pocket. "Perhaps you will at least remember writing this letter. Look at it. That is your handwriting and that is your signature, I believe."

- "Yes—yes—of course I remember very well. Am I to read it?"
 - "Read it aloud."
 - "Dearest and best of girls-"
 - "Am I the dearest and best of girls?"
 - "Certainly. Of course you are."

At this point he should have dropped the letter and taken her in his arms and had no more discussion. But this, unfortunately, he neglected to do. The old Kit, whenever they quarrelled, always made it up that way, and, perhaps, Rosie expected a repetition of the treatment.

"Either you are telling the most shameful of false-hoods," she said, "or you have acquired quite a new manner of telling the truth. I don't like the new manner. Go on!"

"'Dearest and best of girls—I have nothing to tell you—no news to give you—except that I am—.'"

"Stop! You had no news to give me. You had been writing all these papers—you were going to make a great speech—you were coming down here on a visit—you had caused yourself to be talked about—and you say that you have no news to tell me! Really I think you must be clean gone off your head."

"No news—I meant—that would interest you."

"You think so meanly of the woman who is—or was—to be your wife that you do not even tell her such news as that of your own complete transformation. And this is the man who used to tell me every thing!"

"I meant to surprise you---"

"No—no. You didn't care enough for me to tell me anything. Go on. Finish your letter."

"'—no news'" he went on—"'except I am always and always, with ten thousand kisses, your lover—your lover—your lover.'"

"Do you mean that still?" asked Rosie, giving him a second chance for the familiar treatment.

"Certainly—of course—why not?" he replied. "I assure you——"

"Yes; but you needn't assure me. You have now recovered. What is the good of all those assurances, when I can see with my own eyes the change in your manner and in your looks? 'Kit"—she turned upon him fiercely—"you no longer love me! Now don't protest and assure—because it is no use. Good gracious! Do you think I cannot see very well? Have I no eyes? Have I no memory? You no longer love me! Tell me—I ask again—have I offended you in any way?"

"No-no-no-not in the least."

"Then how can you write in the old manner one day and two days afterward meet me with such a change?"

"I can only explain as I have already tried. I have been too busy, perhaps, to think much of such things."

"Too busy? But you have written to me every other day."

"Yes-yes-no doubt. But-"

"And long letters, too. It was by your advice that I came here when Geraldine asked me to come with her."

"You see—it was a sudden thing—a kind of fit."

"Don't, Kit," she said earnestly. "Do not add more falsehoods to the pile you have already heaped up. I wonder," she pressed her head with her hands—"if we are both in our senses—we can't be—I must be mad or you must be mad. Do you suppose I believe that story about giddiness? You were not giddy. You simply did not know me. Oh! what can it mean? What can it mean? What has happened?"

"What should happen?" His voice was constrained.

"It is so terrible that I am frightened," said the girl. "My own lover does not know me. When he hears who I am, his eyes follow me about as if trying to make out who I am. He sits beside me at dinner and says nothing—and when I look into his eyes I find that the old look has gone out of them. The man has actually forgotten the girl whom but yesterday he said he loved."

"No—no—Rosie"—he pronounced the name with an effort—"I am not really changed. You are mistaken. It is only that I have been greatly occupied and perhaps over-worked and—and—you will forgive me, Rosie. I will go away again to-morrow, and come back in a day or two—next week—and you will find me the old Kit again. Will you forgive me?"

As if remembering what is due from an accepted suitor, he made an attempt, but feebly, to lay his

hand upon her waist. The girl shook him off with a shudder.

"No, Kit—not with that look in your eyes. No! It is all over between us. You can leave me now. It is all over, I say."

"All over?"

"Well, why doesn't the man go? I say it is all over—all over—all over," she repeated raising her voice. "Good gracious! what did you expect? What did you want? Do you think that after—oh! it is absurd. Go away, if you please, Mr. Cotterel."

"I must set this right somehow. Look here—Rosie—well then—if it must be "—it was unfortunate that he sighed at this point, because a sigh is often the outward sign of inward satisfaction—"if it must be—don't send me away like this. Let me go away tomorrow—as I proposed—and come back in a week. You will see then. I promise you faithfully that I have not changed."

"He doesn't understand—even yet—the enormity of the thing he has done!" cried the girl. "He can't understand it."

"Give me a week. It is all I ask."

"No—I will not. But—well something is due—there may be something to explain—some way out of it. I will give you two days. If, in two days' time——"

"It is too soon. I want a week."

"If, in two days' time, I see the old look back again—then—then—perhaps, I will ask you for explanations. If you've fallen in love with some other girl," she added coldly, "of course it would be much better to tell me so at once and have done with it. If not, in two days I shall expect the old look back again."

"The old look? Now—I ask you, how can I compel the old look to come back if it won't? Where is it—the old look? A man can't alter his eyes."

"I will give you two days," she repeated—"two days more. If by the end of that time you are not again the old Kit—why all will be over between us. Do you quite understand? Two days."

"Make it six," he said with the air of one who pleads with his uncle for a higher advance. "Only make it six, and I am sure—oh! I am quite sure—that the old look will come back."

"Oh! you cannot be in your right senses. This is absurd. Why make it six? No. If in two days I do not see the old look and hear the same voice—"

"You don't mean that the voice is changed as well as the eyes!"

"Your eyes are the same as they always have been. They are common gray eyes. Quite," she added, icily, "of the common kind. And your voice is the same, I suppose—rather a high pitch in it, nothing unusual in your voice. You have the same face, too—not an uncommon face—and not a very

beautiful face either. Your nose is much the same—short and broad—and your mouth hasn't greatly changed in three months. It never had any shape to speak of——"

"Pray go on," he said.

"Your figure is much the same as it used to be," Rosie added,—"short and thick. I certainly did not accept your hand because anything that belonged to it was beautiful. As for your manners, they are not aristocratic. And as for your customs, they are lazy and shiftless. You have always gone on as if your were born to lie on your back, while the ripe plums dropped into your mouth."

"Well?"

"Seeing all these things—that I took you in spite of everything and knowing everything that I had to expect—I can only say that if my promised lover comes to me, after three months' absence, with all the love gone out of him—out of his eyes, out of his voice, out of his face, out of his manner—why he may give me back my promise and go away. For I will have no more of him. And that is the last word."

"No more of him," he repeated.

"No more of him. Two days, therefore, I give you. Two days. During that time you will not walk with me, sit beside me, talk to me, write to me, or use any of the privileges of a lover. A lover? Oh! With that voice and with those eyes! And not to know me again! not to remember me!"

She ran away, leaving him alone. She ran out of the library into the garden.

"I am sorry for Kit," he murmured. "I really am sorry for Kit. But it's his own fault. Why couldn't he have come to town instead of making me come down here?"

Was it by accident, or was it by design, that Denny was on the terrace when Rosie ran out from the library?

"You have seen him?" he whispered. "You have made it all right with him?"

"No, I have not. You will please not to ask me anything about him at all. Something dreadful has happened to Kit." The tears rose to her eyes, but she brushed them away for pride's sake. "I wonder if he has been so horribly hard up that he can think of nothing but his debts?"

"He has no debts. He has paid them all and he's coining money. Fifty pounds he has accumulated—actually, fifty pounds! Why, it is opulence—and all for your sake."

"Mine? For my sake! Please do not let me hear any more falsehoods; I have heard too many already."

"I could not tell you—about myself—anything but the plain and simple truth, Rosie. I could not."

She broke away and ran down, alone, into the dark garden. Denny looked after her with something like a tear in his eyes.

Then Kit himself came out, looking uncomfortable. "Well?"

"I've had it out with her," he replied. "It isn't well. Look here—you know—you can't expect a man to show in his face and his voice and his eyes that he's in love with a girl he never saw before. They can't do that even on the stage."

"It's the most blundering business I ever came across. Of course she expected to see—what she always used to see. Besides, if you were half an actor. As for acting, if a man can't fall in love with Rosie at first sight, he isn't a man—he is only a—a—a writing machine."

"Thank you. But I don't happen to care much about your very little women," said Kit coldly. "Venus was five feet six, I believe. In point of fact I have not fallen in love with Miss Romaine."

"What did she say?"

"Just exactly what you might expect. She is deeply hurt and offended. As for her forgiving me—or you—I don't see how she can. The thing is too flagrant."

Denny said something which was really needed in order to satisfy his feelings.

"In a week's time, when you begin to plead with her yourself, I fully expect, old man, that you will get what at your club they call, I believe, the boot—the boot. Mind, it is all your own fault. Don't blame me." Denny made no reply at all.

"I've begged for a little time. I asked for a week—you understand why. I'm to have two days only. That is all she will give. If, in two days' time, I can give some kind of explanation and can show that I have recovered the old eyes and the old manner—why then, perhaps.—Otherwise the boot, my friend, the boot!"

CHAPTER IX.

WITH FRIENDS SO OLD.

Breakfast began at half-past nine. As a general rule everybody was tolerably punctual at this, as at every other meal. Rosie, for her part, appeared fresh and smiling as if there had been no quarrel or anything at all out of the common on yester eve. Yet such a thing when it happens is immediately whispered all over the house. The Temple of Fame has, you see, many departments. In the lowest of all, the goddess employs messengers who are made to run about perpetually on domestic business, picking up tittle-tattle, whispering things that happen, things that have not happened, things that ought to have happened, and, above all, things that ought not to have happened, in the ear of everybody in turn. Some of the messengers, however, of this department -those who are very active-are engaged in working up the personal paragraphs for the papers. who had been told off for special service in this house, therefore, went round industriously to the pillow of every young lady in turn and told her, murmuring in her ear, so that the words sounded like the very breath of her sleeping self:

"There has been a quarrel between Kit Cotterel and Rosie. He received her to-day as coldly as if he did not even know her. She is very angry and threatens to break it off."

It must, I say, have been one of these messengers who had conveyed this information in a secret midnight manner, because everybody knew exactly what had happened. Yet Rosie had told nobody except Geraldine and dear old Sophia and one or two more, and these under promise of confidence the most inviolable. Everybody knew it, and all were prepared to meet her as a drooping lily, with murmuring words and the kiss of condolence and some of the luxury of woe.

She walked in, however, with no external signs of wanting sympathy or condolences. A smile was on her lips and resolution sat upon her brow. She took her seat and nodded to everybody with even more than usual sprightliness, and accepted food readily, as if a lovers' quarrel was apt to make one hungry. This conduct caused universal admiration. was felt, should every girl, who knows what is due to herself, receive and resent the coldness of a lover. Where there is no ardor, there can be no love. hang the head and weep in a corner is unworthy the name of British maiden. Only those who had observing eyes discovered that the girl's cheek was a little flushed and her eyes a little too bright. But to show no outward sign or token after such a rupture, or, at least, such a very pretty quarrel, is like coming out of a fight without a scratch.

Fortunately the other combatant was not present. He had the grace to stay away. That awkwardness, if any, was spared the poor girl. Kit gave his friends no opportunity of observing how far his coldness was real or fancied, and Denny sat beside the deserted one paying her all the attentions—it was afterward remembered—of a lover. But she received them passively.

It was the day of the last picnic. They all made haste to talk about it. Every morning they arranged their plans for the day, and divided into parties, and made up matches, games, plays, and the rest of it. But four days more and the holidays would be over. Then, once more to London—once more to the weary round of work—once more to the search for the honest employer, and for the remunerative work—once more, for most of them, short commons in the way of luxuries, and, in the way of social pleasures, starvation. Therefore there was some sadness already hanging over the party—the shadow of approaching change.

As for the unlucky Kit, this absurd lover, who had actually forgotten that he was in love, and knew not even the face of his mistress, he got up earlier than the rest and went forth into the meadows and the stubbles, probably with the hope of warming his poor frozen heart in the sunshine. He did not return

until the picnic party had gone. Then he went into the library, sat down at a table, spread out his books and papers, and in one minute became as much absorbed in his work as if there had been no Rosie at all. In fact there was no Rosie to him. She belonged to the other fellow—it was not his lovequarrel.

Presently the door opened softly and he looked up. It was Geraldine—the girl who had been Kit's ancient and familiar friend. He was safe with her: she it was who applauded the great transformation and was proud of one so industrious.

She walked to his table, her face full of sweet seriousness, and laid her hand affectionately upon his shoulder.

"Kit," she said, "when I learned that you were not going to join the party, I thought I would stay at home too, so that we might have a good talk together about many things. Are you too busy for a little talk?"

"I am always busy," said this working bee, "but never too busy for you, Geraldine."

"Fancy you always busy! It is too delightful. Oh, the change! Tell me how it came about—this wonderful transformation."

"Well—as I said before—at twenty-seven one has played long enough."

"That hardly seems a sufficient reason. Never mind, the thing has happened, and oh! dear Kit, we

are so proud of you, and so happy!" Her eyes became humid. "The lazy and careless time is over and gone—all our disappointments are ended—that is enough."

She would have said more, but her voice broke. She laid her hand upon his and pressed the back of it—quite a sisterly method of hand-pressing.

"You think too much about it, Geraldine," he said.

"No, no; I cannot think too much about it. Come—tell me, first, what you are writing—verses?"

"No, certainly not; we have had enough of that rubbish. To string together those old idle rhymes was indeed a waste absolute."

"And yet, how many rhymes have you made, Kit? How many hours have you wasted?"

"Well, at all events, what I am doing here—I have only two or three days to finish it in, I must make haste—is a paper on a question of Colonization. I studied it on the spot—that is to say, I got all the information as near first hand as possible. I hope it will prove a valuable contribution to the subject."

"Put it aside for five mintues, and tell me, Kit, what is this trouble about Rosie?"

"What is it?" he repeated.

"You know, of course, that she is excessively hurt and pained by your coldness."

"I believe she must be. I am sorry."

"She came to my room last night and had a great

cry about it. She says you actually did not know her."

"I told her—I explained."

"And she says that you love her no longer. What can it mean, Kit?"

"It means what I tried to explain to her—if she would only believe me."

"Well, Kit, explain to me. You have known me long enough and well enough to explain everything to me."

"It is difficult," he said, leaning back and dropping his eyes, "to make things quite clear. You see it is three months since I have seen Rosie."

The girl remarked that he pronounced her name with an effort, instead of lingering over it fondly.

"Yes: it is three months. But you have written to her constantly, and always with the most ardent professions."

"I suppose—force of habit—force of habit," he repeated with an impatient gesture.

"Well—but, Kit—Kit—what does this mean? Force of habit?"

"When she came running in, my mind was otherwise occupied and I—I—in fact I was not thinking of her, and perhaps I looked—I may have looked for the moment—as if I did not recognize her. Only for the moment, you know."

"Yes—yes—that is what Rosie tells me. You offered to shake hands with her, but in so cold a

manner that she was simply terrified. And she declares that your manner and look all the evening were those of a man talking to a woman to whom he has just been introduced."

"That is her imagination."

"Well, but"—she persisted. "I cannot understand. Do you remember how you came running to me four months ago with the joyful news that Rosie was going to make you happy? Do you remember, my dear boy, how your voice broke and your eyes filled with tears while you told me about her? What has become of all that rapture?"

"Where are the snows of yester year? Why tax me with the mood of a day gone by?"

"Is it possible—no, Kit, it is not possible—that you have changed your mind? If that is so——" She broke off, because indeed she did not know how to finish the sentence without a condemnation too grave to be hastily pronounced.

"I asked her for a week—she will only give me two days. I have assured her that if she will only consent to give me a week, everything will come right again. But she won't. That is her obstinacy, you see. If she would only give me a week."

"Why a week?"

"Well, Geraldine, all I can say is, that just at the moment I am so much occupied with other things that—that—well, in a week, I shall be more free—you will see then yourself. Your old friend will come back to you, perhaps, as careless and lazy as ever."

"I want my old friend to stay as he is—thoughtful, studious, and industrious. My old friend as he was,—Kit, frivolous, lazy, and dreamy—I want to see no more. But there is no reason why my old friend's heart should be changed."

Kit made no reply. Affairs of the heart are always delicate things to speak about.

"Well, what shall we do then?"

"Make her give me a week, that is all I ask. Five days will be even enough."

"Why? This is nonsense, Kit, stark staring nonsense. Why a week any more than a day? If you love poor Rosie still, you can tell her so to-day—or to-morrow, if you like—just as well as next week."

"It does seem so, doesn't it? Yet—never mind Rosie; tell me about yourself, Geraldine. Are you happy here?"

His voice perceptibly softened, and his eyes be trayed an interest in this young lady which he ha not shown at the mention of poor Rosie.

"Oh! yes. Denny is most kind and generous. I have never before had such a holiday—you know that very well, Kit."

"Of course. How could you? How could you?"
It is to be remarked that though he knew no more and no less concerning the affairs of Geraldine than he knew of Rosie, the former did not find out his

ignorance. "Poor girl! Never such a holiday as this before." He made up his mind to find out from the other men, with as little delay as possible, the exact circumstances of the case. Meantime, by fencing and artful pretence, he seemed to know all that he was supposed to know. Few claimants have ever succeeded in deceiving the companions of childhood. Yet, for the time at least, this impostor did succeed.

They talked together for two hours, in which the girl was drawn on to speak of her aspirations and ambitions, and the young man sympathized.

"We may not meet this evening," said Kit, when she would stay no longer. "I was allowed two days. It will be best for me to spend this interval out of her sight."

"But—consider Kit,—don't you want to see her, and to be with her all the time?"

"No, I do not. If she would only give me a week."

"Oh! you are mysterious again. I shall go. Kit"—she laid her hand upon his arm—"don't overdo ambition. Leave some room for love. You should put away your papers and come out, and put on a cheerful front as if you knew it would all come right."

"Oh! I know it will all come right. Of that I have no doubt whatever," he replied, carelessly; "but it will take certainly six days, and if she would only——"

Geraldine shook her head, laughed, and ran away. Kit took up his pen again and resumed his work.

But the face of the girl came between him and his hard facts and harder logic. How can one reason calmly and dispassionately with a girl's face between one's eyes and the paper? For my own part I am astonished that mathematicians, civil engineers, and men who make, invent, and devise machinery, can ever find time to fall in love. I suppose they make up their mind to a complete interruption and stopping of work while it lasts. To them a long engagement would mean bankruptcy.

"Good Lord!" he murmured. "He has been in the company of that beautiful creature—that queenly woman—pretty well all her life, and he goes and picks up that little insignificant creature who——Now—if——" But here his thoughts became too tangled for continuous speech. At such moments the brain goes off into half a dozen lines of reflection, all working at the same time. They are difficult to follow and impossible to interpret, or translate into speech.

"If"—he thought: we are all of us perpetually thinking, devising, contriving, lamenting, with this little conjunction at the beginning. "If she knew"—of course she did not know—"would her heart, like every other woman's, harden at the prospect of wealth so enormous? No—surely no."

He had learned from his own experience that

there are other women who do not continually desire a vast income and the gratification of boundless desires.

He tried his work again. A second time he threw down the pen. He got up, walked to the window and stepped out upon the terrace. Lying on the grass under the walnut-tree he descried the young poet, the boy Robbie Lythe. He was lying supine, his head upon his hands, apparently asleep. Beside him was a volume of Keats. So lay Keats himself upon the grassy slopes of Hampstead to gaze upon the other grassy slopes which rise to Highgate, the last oaks of the old Middlesex Forest lying between.

Kit watched the boy with interest. He knew the symptoms. Indeed, this Kit—not the other—knew a very remarkable quantity of things. He marked the boy's hair—fine, silky and abundant: the upper eyelashes long and curled, the lower lying on the cheek: the fine oval lines and the delicate hue of the cheek: the blue veins showing on the back of his hand and on his temples. While he watched, the boy half-awoke, rolled his head, and opened his eyes. They were liquid eyes glistening, and full. He closed them immediately, and seemed to fall asleep once more.

Then there came walking slowly along the terrace, his hat in his hand, his brown velvet jacket thrown open to the air, the veteran Art Critic, Mr. Pinder.

"Ah!" he said, "I thought you were off with the

wagon-load of women this morning. Pleased I was to get rid of their cackle for an hour or two. Watching that poor lad? Sad look-out for him—very."

"A case of Struma Beautiful," said Kit scientifically.

- "Struma what?"
- "Struma Beautiful. I should say, already in a somewhat advanced stage. There is languor and lassitude of the limbs. I daresay he has had a cough for a long time,—he is short of breath."
- "Well, man, if you mean that Robbie Lythe will go off in a consumption, I suppose we've all known that for long time."

"In a little while he will lose his beauty," Kit continued, as if he had been a physician: "the oval face will lose its curves: his cheek-bones will show: his nose will grow sharp: his hands will waste: his mind will grow languid: he will go on getting worse, and suddenly he will die. I have read of such cases and have seen them in hospital. Each one is a warning and a lesson, if men were not too foolish to learn. All our diseases—all our sufferings come from ignorance and the blindness which never sees anything."

Mr. Pinder stared. Kit the scientific—Kit the moralist—was beyond him.

"Kit, Kit," he sighed, "how changed! It fatigues the brain to think of you. And all in three short months: well, no one thought you had it in you." "You see I did have it in me," Kit replied coldly. This old man bibulous irritated him.

"Don't overdo it, Kit. Not too much zeal. I dare say it makes you feel mighty virtuous and superior. The fellows at the club are left far behind. But don't overdo it; don't come the moral philosopher over us. Leave us unrebuked. Now, Kit, if you have anything left of the old Adam, let us get our pipes and a tankard of something cool—the beer in this house is perfectly lovely,—and find a shady corner and have a talk."

"Thank you, I have work to do; and I never drink in the morning."

"Well," the old man sighed. "Stop a moment, Kit. There's nobody to talk to in the house; don't go in. Look here, Kit, about that half-sovereign?"

"What half-sovereign?"

"That insignificant coin which you refused to lend me the other day."

"What does it matter?"

"No, no—stop! The coin is nothing; it is the refusal that sticks. It wasn't like you, to refuse that little loan. It wasn't like any of the set among whom you have lived. It wasn't—hang it!—respectful treatment of a man old enough to be your grandfather, begad! to refuse him that little trifling obligation. You ought to have been gratified—honored—by the request. In your old age, when I am dead and gone, you will have to confess that Pinder—

Pinder, the Art Gritic—Pinder once asked you to lend him half-a-sovereign, and you refused. This will gnaw like an adder's tooth. Besides, the thing showed a spirit of suspicion—a nasty, tradesmanlike, arithmetical spirit, which you, nursed upon the traditions of the past, should have been the first to condemn."

"Why so?"

"Who counts what he lends or what he borrows? We lend each other a sovereign here and half-a sovereign there; who can keep account of such trifles? When all is told, nobody owes anybody anything; we are even. The slate is wiped clean, and we begin again. Only rich men keep accounts. That is why one should not desire riches. I say no more. But I confess, Kit, that I was sorry for you, very sorry. In one so young, too, and so hard up."

"I am not so young, my dear sir; and I am no longer hard-up."

"You accompanied your refusal with maxims, too
—maxims! Well, I can never again borrow of you"
—he shook his head sorrowfully,—"never again.
You are changed indeed, my poor young friend."

Kit was touched by the sincerity of the good old man's lamentation.

"My dear sir," he said kindly, "we all change sometimes. Wait a week or so, and perhaps you will find me changed back again."

"Let us hope so. You are missed at the club, too.

Other fellows can sing and play, but nobody so well as Kit—the old Kit. Denny Stirling sings your songs now, but not so well, Kit—not so well. Other fellows can tell stories, but none like Kit—the old Kit. Denny Stirling tries. He tells stories, your stories, too; but not so well, Kit—not so well. Let us hope, indeed, that you will come back to us. What profits it, my dear young friend, for a man to get articles into the *Contemporary*, if he also becomes a solemn prig?"

He was an old man, otherwise these words would have been resented.

"Well—well," he went on, "Dixi. I have liberated my soul. Enough about you. Now about other matters. Tell me—between friends, you know—something about this young Cresus."

"What about him? He is an old friend of mine."

"So am I. But this young fellow I have only known since I came here, on an invitation sent by your recommendation. He told me so, which encourages a man, yet makes one cautious. What do you think of him? Rather soft in the head, I take it."

"Perhaps."

"And not too wise. He rattles on as if he was trying to imitate you, Kit. But he can't do it so well. He doesn't quite look the part: too tall, too well groomed—too much Piccadilly. Now you are short and fat and jolly-looking (that is, you were).

Hanged if you are now. Fleet street, all through, you were."

"Go on—never mind my looks; they are good enough for me."

"In these matters one should proceed with caution. Young Dives has shown so much interest in me as to ask me here for three weeks. He finds champagne every evening—the very best of champagne,—and Scotch after it—and really the very softest old Scotch I ever drank. Now, you know, hospitality like this is really a direct invitation to borrow. Therefore, advise me, Kit. Twenty pounds? Too much, you say? You really think twenty pounds too much? He's rolling in gold, you know."

"I say nothing," Kit replied with severity. "I am not prepared to advise you at all in such a matter. Since you came here as a guest, I must say, however, that it would be more dignified to borrow nothing."

"Kit Cotterel,"—the old Bohemian drew himself up with offended pride—"at my age, and with my experience, I may be allowed to know what is due to dignity. Understand, sir, that a gentleman may always borrow without a sacrifice of personal dignity: I have myself borrowed for forty years. He cannot, it is true, accept gifts; he may not take money. But he may borrow—he may borrow—without loss of self-respect. Remember that, sir."

He clapped on his hat, and walked away with

much dignity, murmuring phrases that began with the letter d and ended with the syllable prig.

Kit heard the words with superior pity, unmixed with scorn or wrath. He looked at his watch. It wanted half-an-hour of luncheon; then he would meet Geraldine again. But Mr. Pinder would be there too; therefore, there should be no more confidences.

Then the boy lying on the grass raised his head and called him:

"Kit-Kit Cotterel, I saw you last night; but I couldn't get in a word. And you looked so worried that I didn't try twice. What has worried you, Kit? To-day you look so serious, so nervous. Is that because you have become a great writer all at once? Won't you write any more verses? Come over here and talk to me. Don't ask me to get up and leave this shady corner; the grass is soft and the light is soft," the boy murmured, as if the mere physical enjoyment was almost more than he could bear. "Come over and sit beside me, Kit; this place is heaven! I am full of lovely thoughts all day long, if I could only write them down. Oh! what poetry there will be when we reach to fulness of strength and perfect language! But it will not be all at once; we shall be always learning. Just now, only to lie on my back, with the dancing flicker of green shade and of sunshine playing through the leaves, and to hear the drone of the bees, and to feel the breeze, is

happiness; and to have you with me as well, Kit, it is too much."

"Are you better?" asked Kit, wondering who the boy really was.

"Oh! I am ever so much better than when you saw me last, three months ago. I had a bad time, rather, in July; I think I should have died for yearning after the green fields and the woods, if this invitation hadn't come. It was through you that it did come. I have never thanked you for it. Well, Kit, I shan't now, because it was nothing but your way—always trying to do something pleasant for somebody. I've had the most wonderful holiday here," he sighed heavily; "it is nearly over, but it will be a memory when I go back."

Looking at this lad, Kit remembered certain words of his own about the wonderful power of suffering as an example and a stimulus, and he thought that he should somehow like this boy not to become an example and a lesson to humanity. A thought unworthy of a philosopher. But it crossed his mind.

"Have you talked with Geraldine since you came?" asked the boy.

"Yes, we had a little talk last night, and we have had a good talk this morning."

"We have been talking a good deal about you, especially since the splendid news came. We don't agree; I want you to go on writing verses, but she wants you to develop the more serious side. Don't

quite give up verses. Oh! to write such verses as Keats wrote—when every line rings and rings in your brain! Kit, think of that; you might produce something as good. Don't quite give up verses."

"I cannot say—just yet—what—I shall do."

"Geraldine is ever so much better and stronger than she was before she came. She is perfectly splendid now. I say, Kit,"—he looked round to see if any one was looking,—"do you think I shall offend you if I ask you a question?"

"Ask as many as you please."

"You are such a good old friend to me, and so is Geraldine. It is a very impudent question, but it is in my mind always whenever I see Geraldine and you together."

"Ask the question, you will not offend me."

"Don't you think Geraldine a splendid girl—one of a million—the best girl that ever was?"

"Certainly," Kit replied, with assurance. "I am sure she is all that she looks."

"There is nobody like her, is there? Nobody so unselfish? Look in her face; it is the face of Beatrice. Only to look at her face lifts up the heart," his limpid eyes grew dim with the ready tears. "I say, Kit, in her presence it is impossible to be mean and low—all base thoughts fly shrieking at her approach. As for me, I worship her; I fall at her feet."

Kit sat down on the grass beside the boy, whose

enthusiasm interested him. Besides, he felt a desire to talk and to hear more about Geraldine.

"You worship her? I do not wonder at it."

"I am unworthy to speak to her, but she suffers me. Kit, you know how kind you have been to me, how should I have got along at all without you? It always seems to me that it is Geraldine who has helped me, and not you. I put you two together always—and when you have helped me out of your poverty, I always think it is Geraldine who has done it with you. She knows I love her, and I think she knows that she is my goddess—my spiritual, not my earthly mistress! But you—Kit, you!"

"What of me?"

"You have known her all her life. You used to play with her, and you used to tell her all your ambitions. She has never ceased to watch you and to pray for you. And now you have come out so splendidly she is so proud and happy; I cannot tell you how proud and happy she is——"

"Well, and what of me?"

He understood now the question in the boy's mind, but he wanted to hear it put plainly.

"What I wonder is—every day—why you, who know her so well, do not worship her also?"

Kit made no reply. He got up and walked about the lawn; then he came back again.

"Out of her poverty," you said. "Is Geraldine still so poor?"

"What a question for you to ask! Can she ever be anything else? Just before we came here she was very poor indeed, because there was poor dear Sophia Gentry, you know—none of her pictures have sold this year, and what she will do when we go back we do not know. We are all so poor—so poor.

"All so poor," Kit repeated.

"But we stand by each other. Kit, it makes me wonder to see them all here. They go on as if they were born to it: they dance and sing and play as if they had been doing nothing else all their days. Well, Denny is the kindest and most generous man in the world—almost as generous as you, Kit."

"And when it is over, you will all go back more discontented than ever."

"No, no—filled with lovely memories. Discontented, after such a holiday as this? Kit, you are unreasonable."

Kit nodded gravely and went back to the library. He was beginning to understand himself, and he had the unique advantage of being able to examine his own life from an outside point of view. This made him critical. It also made him hard upon his own sins and shortcomings, which he now discovered were many, great, and grievous.

CHAPTER X.

AFTER LUNCHEON.

At the mid-day refection Geraldine did not ap-Mr. Pinder, still disposed to growl like the skies after a thunderstorm, Kit, and Robbie Lythe represented the whole party. The boy quickly finished his luncheon and left the other two, betaking himself to the drawing-room, which he could have to himself the whole afternoon, unless Geraldine should happen to come and sit beside him. he would lie at full length on cushions in one of the deep windows, and watch the sunshine on the leaves without, or the light playing on the painted coats of arms and the panels and dark furniture of the long low room. This was his intention, with the further thought of enjoying every moment of the time, so that nothing should be lost or forgotten when in the dark winter to follow he should remember this holiday for his solace.

Alas! he presently fell asleep, and so lost the whole afternoon; though in his dreams he was carried to the Heaven in which only young poets are allowed, there to be filled with thoughts ineffable,

which even the greatest of poets cannot interpret into speech of man.

Had he been awake and listening, he might have heard the voices of the two men who talked in the dining-room. Then his right ear would have begun to burn, which happens when people speak well of you. Unhappily, it is too often the left ear which burns. This is not, if you please, because people are so malicious, but because we are ourselves so transparently weak and foolish.

When Mr. Pinder, who still preserved the respectable wreck of a once colossal appetite, had done justice to the lunch, he clutched a decanter—a movement familiar to all who have watched the veteran toper—and poured out three glasses in succession, which he drank, not hurriedly, yet with eagerness.

"Ha!" he said, pausing after the third, "this is the wine, Kit, which we can't get at the club. Madeira of some kind—Madeira made in Hamburg—there is on the list, I dare say, though I have never heard of any one calling for it. To drink Madeira is a profession of wealth. To place Madeira on your table is a proof of wealth. It is the wine of the rich: it looks rich: it tastes rich: there's a rich man's self-complacency about it: an oily, unctuous self-satisfaction which belongs to the rich man: it demands the finest glasses and the noblest decanters. It ought to be on the table of every man who has made his money."

- "Denny Stirling hasn't made his money."
- "No; but his uncle did—Sam Stirling—who wasn't so old as I am by a half a dozen years. The cursing it was, I believe, that killed him."
 - "What cursing?"
- "Now I come to think about it, the very last person I should have expected to meet under this roof is that boy who had lunch with us—Robbie Lythe—the very last person. If it's accidental, it's a very curious and interesting accident. The very last person. I wonder he doesn't pull down the pillars of the house! I wonder he doesn't snatch the carving-knife and prod his host in a vital part!"

"Why the last person? Why shouldn't Robbie Lythe be here?"

"Don't you know? Your father knew and Geraldine's father—everybody who knew Tom Lythe knew the story. I should have thought you had heard it long ago. But all his friends are dead, and I suppose the thing has been pretty well forgotten. Sophia Gentry knows it. Dear me! when I die, Kit, what an immense quantity of miscellaneous scandal will be forgotten! It doesn't get into the memoirs. If I could only write the things I have heard! Nobody's real life has ever been written—not even Rousseau's or Saint Augustine's. Now there's the story of Sam Stirling, the millionaire. What a tearing and a rending of reputation there would be if I could write all that I have heard and seen!"

He took another glass of Madeira, shaking his head sadly.

"As for Robbie Lythe," said Kit, fencing, "one can see that he is consumptive. What else should I know about him?"

"Try this Madeira. No? You have turned over a new leaf, Kit, and it's a reproach to your elders. You are become Kit the sober, Kit the moral maximmaker, Kit the corrector of morals, Kit the censor, for which you deserve to be expelled from the club. You are also Kit the industrions. You think you are going to lay the foundation of a cellar of Madeira all your own, I suppose. Well, you will never get that cellar; don't think it. They won't allow you to get rich—the people who pay the writing-man. When you are as old as I am you will very likely be as poor, with the bitter reflection of feeling that all your work has gone to make others rich. Now I haven't done that. If I am not rich myself, no one can say I have made him rich. No, sir; that thought brings comfort. There is no successful book of mine which has made a publisher rich. Well,"—he pushed back his chair and got up,—"you can go and slave for some editor or bookseller; I shall go and have a quiet pipe in the smoking-room and a nap."

"But about Robbie Lythe. Sit down again, man, and tell me all about it."

Mr. Pinder took up the decanter. There were still two or three glasses in it. He sat down again,

his fingers curled lovingly round the neck of the bottle.

- "Well, I knew his father, Tom Lythe. Very old friend of mine, Tom was."
 - "What had his father to do with this roof?"
- "I knew Tom early in life, when he was bright and clever; and I knew him late in life, when he was soured with disappointments. At one time—a few years before his death—I thought he had got over the trouble. Certainly, he seemed settled down to steady and generally cheerful drinking. But in his last illness it all came back to him. I was with him when he died, and he died very wretchedly. Lamented his wasted life, and compared his career with that of his old pal, Sam Stirling; and he cursed him for the cause of everything—cursed him solemnly, cursed him with his dying breath, cursed him and everything belonging to him."
 - "Why?"
- "And after twenty years, here is his son a guest and friend of Sam Stirling's nephew and heir!"
- "What does it mean? Why should the man curse my—Mr. Stirling?"
- "They are both dead now, he who cursed and he who was cursed. Nobody could stand up against curses so tremendous. Sam Stirling died a year or two afterward. I suppose no one told him about the curse, and yet—Well, the world goes round, and here is the boy in this very house."

- "You have not told me why this cursing was necessary?"
- "Tom Lythe cursed his old pal because, you see, Sam Stirling stole his invention."
 - "What invention?"
- "Do you know how that enormous fortune was made?"
- "Yes—yes, I know; we needn't stop for that. Do get on."
- "Well, Tom invented the thing, not Sam Stirling at all. Bless you! Sam never invented anything; he was too stupid. He made Tom work, and stole what he made."
 - "Stole is a strong word, Mr. Pinder."
- "So it is, Mr. Cotterel. You needn't look so savage. Sam wasn't your uncle, and you are not any the richer for his rogueries, are you? Stole, I said. Sam stole the invention, and grew richer every day; while Tom, from whose hands it had come, grew poorer and poorer. Some people say he went downhill because he took to drink. Now, there is generally a cause why people take to drink. In Tom's case it was rage and vexation because he saw Sam growing rich at his expense."
 - "Oh! Is this true, I wonder?"
- "Fact, I assure you; quite true. Tom told everybody. There wasn't a bar in Fleet Street or the Strand twenty years ago where Tom's story wasn't known. To be sure, the men he told it to were all

soakers like himself; and after twenty years there are not many left of any set of soakers. They are all dead except me." Mr. Pinder's Madeira had the effect of making him repeat his words. The wine of the rich will do this. "Bless you! I don't suppose that Denny Stirling has ever heard of the story, or Robbie Lythe either."

"I assure you Denny hasn't." Kit sat up eagerly. "I am certain that he hasn't the least suspicion—how should he have?"

"Tom told it to me a hundred times; he even wrote it down for me. He wanted me to make a play of it—and I did think, once, that it might dramatize. That was a good time ago—five and-twenty years ago—when I still thought of making plays. Yes, there is a situation in it. Pity I didn't work it up when I was still youngish and strong. Dear me! what a man I was at five and forty!"

"What was the situation?"

"Old Sam Stirling made his money by---"

"Yes, yes: we all know that. Get on."

"Tom Lythe and Sam Stirling were apprenticed to the same shop—mechanical engineers they were, and they were afterward employed in the same works. Pals, they were. One day Tom, who was an original kind of a chap, made a discovery. He's told me often what it was: but I never understood wheels and cogs and things. Every one to his trade. Tom was a clever chap, but he was a fool. There are

two kinds of clever chaps, Kit." The old man leaned back in his chair and rolled the glass about in his fingers; he also stretched out his legs, and wagged his head, showing that he was physically comfortable, and that he was in no hurry to terminate this "Two kinds-two kinds-Kit, my conversation. moral and superior young friend. There's the kind which invents, creates, and discovers—and is subsequently robbed, plundered, and turned stark naked into the street. I am one of that kind-every man who writes belongs to that tribe. So are you; so are all the fellows at the club. That's the reason why there's no Madeira like this to be found there. The second kind contains those who see their way how to make the first kind produce all the work for them to rob. That is the set to join. If you are wise you will pass over to that camp where they have Madeira every day-stuff like this: see how it clings to the glass! Just so doth Dives cling to his fine gold and his precious stuffs. Molten gold this is—nothing less than molten gold."

"Can't we get back to the story?"

"There is not much story; it's done every day, wherever men work. You see, Kit, men are so wonderfully and fearfully made that they work, they throw their best work, they bring all their powers, their inventions, and their contrivances, and lay them at the feet of their employer, though they know him to be a greedy grinder and a sweater.

Yes, and they will sell the finest invention, just as they will sell the most wonderful book or the most splendid picture—whether on a canvas or in print, —for next to nothing to the first crafty man who comes to buy it."

"We are coming, I suppose, to an end before long?" said Kit impatiently.

"We have come to the end of the story, and to the last glass in the bottle"—Mr. Pinder poured it out as he spoke. "I am sorry, Kit, that you would have none, because it really was a most beautiful bottle of Madeira. There is no more story, in fact. Tom Lythe made his discovery; his friend Sam Stirling got possession of it. How he got it matters nothing——"

"You said he stole it."

"Well, Sam became a millionaire out of Tom's invention, and Tom remained in his poverty. When one man gets rich out of another man's brains while the inventor remains poor, the first man is a thief and a robber, Kit. Is that good political economy?" He pronounced the first word with some difficulty, but his meaning was clear.

"No; that is very bad political economy, because whatever a man can buy becomes his own, whatever the price he has paid for it. Did my—did Mr. Stirling purchase Tom's invention, or did he steal it?"

"The situation of it in the play which I never wrote was something like this: Sam has found out

—never mind how—that his friend has hit upon an invention; Tom has told him in general terms, if you like. Then Sam sets his wits to work to find out what it is, and he can't. He watches his friend in the engine-room: he hangs about his desk: he searches his drawers, but he can't find anything; because, you see, Tom has his notes in his pockets all the time. At last he makes him drunk, and while he is drunk he steals the notes, copies them, replaces them in the drunken man's pocket, and next day goes and registers the invention."

"Did that really happen?"

"Perhaps; I cannot say. The situation wasn't a bad one, and I don't remember ever seeing it on any stage. Perhaps he made Tom drunk, and then persuaded him to sell his right. There was drink in it, I know."

"One would like to know exactly how it was done, or if it was done at all."

"It was done, somehow: Sam got rich—Tom grew poor: Sam remained a rogue and a thief, Tom became a poor drunkard. When all secrets are revealed, Kit, my boy, I would rather be Tom than that other fellow."

"Are you really sure—certain—that some such thing happened?"

"I am perfectly certain—as certain as I am that this bottle is empty—that Sam Stirling never invented anything. He was a lumpish kind of man, with small eyes close together, indolent in body and sluggish of brain. He invent? No, sir; but he could deceive and steal. Many a man has got the low cunning which enables him to prey on men's brains."

Kit, flushed and agitated, sprang to his feet.

"I am very sorry you have told me this story and yet I ought to know it. I cannot tell you how sorry I am to learn that shameful business——"

"Why, what does it matter to you?"

"Perhaps we can hunt up the thing, and prove the exact truth. Perhaps we may make up to the boy for this treachery, if it was treachery——"

"Well, Kit, you may be devilish clever; you may write very fine articles: but you can't very well make up for the loss of a million or three millions—they say it is three millions."

"No-no, of course not; and yet-"

"Sam Stirling wasn't your uncle. Better let sleeping dogs lie. The boy knows nothing about it, and Denny Stirling knows nothing. Best say no more about it."

"It is disgraceful—it is shameful. It is enough to poison the life of the man who has got that fortune, only to feel——"

"My dear Kit, these are heroics. The thing is done—Tom is dead; and he cursed the robber, and the robber is dead."

"But the boy survives."

"Very true; and, considering all the circumstances, I say again, that it is curious, to say the least of it, to see Tom's son enjoying the hospitality of Sam's heir, and both in ignorance of these little facts. When a man grows old, if he hasn't spent his time, as you propose to spend yours, in making editors and publishers rich; if, I say, he has got with other men, and spent his time in convivial talk, he has learned a great deal, and his latter days ought to be very interesting. And now, my dear boy,"—he rose slowly and deliberately,—"Madeira, if you drink a whole bottle, is apt to get into the head a bit. I shall go to the smoking-room and sleep it off."

11

CHAPTER XI.

THE PICNIC.

In this favored land there is everywhere within easy reach a ruined castle or a ruined abbev or a British hill-fort or a Roman camp. They have been left untouched by successive generations, in order that young people may have a place for picnics. that the works of the great destroyers—King Harry the Eighth, who ruined the Abbeys, and King Cromwell who slighted the castles—remain to keep their memory green, as much as the massive piles of the dread Sovereign, Great Cheops himself. the young man sits among these ruins, a dainty damsel at his side, his seat a mound which covers broken tracery, shattered mullions, and precious carved work; when he gazes down the long roofless nave, upon the wreck of the once noble west front, and murmurs a tender whisper in the ear of his companion: when to these joys he adds the wing of a chicken and a goodly slice of toothsome ham, with salad from the salad-bowl and a bumper of champagne; and when one thinks of the pale-faced nuns who wandered once about the broken cloisters, that

young man is moved to gratitude for the benevolent old monarch who made this place a ruin—for him.

To such an abbey, still splendid with tall columns and windows of delicate tracery and lofty arches, came this company in brakes and wagonnettes. They rambled among the grass-grown nooks: they stood within the walls of the old Refectory, and marked the place where the pulpit stood, in which the novice read The Acts of the Saints—the only work of fiction allowed to the unhappy monks: they laughed and chattered within the chapel, which once echoed before break of day with their chanting: they peered into the monks' kitchen, and wondered what culinary marvels were tossed up for the Abbot, and how the monastic soup was brewed: they stood beside the old fish-ponds, and asked how the carp and perch were dressed so that even days of fasting might not altogether lack some carnal joy: they walked about the broken cloisters which surround the monks' burial-place—their bones lie long forgotten, even the bones of the wisest Abbot and the gravest scholar and the most beautiful illuminator and the most wonderful writer of manuscript, all forgotten and their works destroyed. Their laughter echoed about the walls, because, though they said "This is the Refectory, this the Abbot's room and this the kitchen"—their thoughts were not at all among the dead monks. Why should they? The present belongs to the young. Theirs is the sunshine: theirs all the fruits. Dry-as-dust and his friends are well stricken in years, poor things. They may restore the old abbey, and revive the old life—for their own amusement—the young have nothing to do with the dead past, save to enjoy whatever heritage that it has conferred upon them.

In the very centre of this roofless church, Rosie sat upon a fallen stone, Denny beside her. The merriment had gone out of her face; she laughed no longer: the tears stood in her eyes: while Denny, like a loyal friend, was pleading, with all the eloquence at his command, the cause of his friend. It was just at the very moment, by a curious coincidence—only nobody knew it—that Robbie Lythe was putting that question of his concerning Geraldine.

"It is no use," said Rosie, "no use at all trying to shield him. He has been carrying on a treacherous game. Every other day he has written me a letter—a letter such as one has a reason to expect if one is engaged——" She blushed a little. "If you were engaged you would know exactly the kind of letter."

"I hope I should under such circumstances behave, in all respects, as an engaged man ought. If I were engaged to—to one girl of all the girls in the world, I know that I should exhaust the adjectives of the language and fill the letters with one verb only—past, present, and future."

"And all the time," Rosie continued, "he has been

actually forgetting my very face. The only explanation he has offered is, in fact, an outrage in itself—an insult that I can never forgive—it is that he had really, for the moment, forgotten me! There is an explanation from a man who pretends to be in love!"

"It is awkward, certainly," said Denny, rubbing his chin. "It is extremely awkward. In fact, I never heard of a position more awkward."

"You can call it awkward if you please—I call it heartless."

"It seems heartless. But suppose"—he rubbed his chin harder—"suppose one could find a better explanation?"

"It is really no use looking for explanations, Kit has entirely lost any love he might have had for me once. And I have given him up."

"I was only going to suggest—you know—a possible explanation. Kit is a very good actor—isn't he?"

"I don't know. He can sit down and sing and make faces—if you call that acting. You do the same thing in the same way; but a great deal better."

"Oh! you think I do these things better than Kit?"

"He puts too much buffoonery into his singing.

A man should never be a buffoon."

"Oh!" said Denny. "And you think I—I have improved upon his style."

"Certainly. Kit may be a buffoon when he per-

mits himself to lose his self-respect; but one can hardly call him an actor."

"Yet he is—Kit is a very fine actor and full of fun. Quite full of fun. Capable of any kind of mad waggery—which suggests a very simple explanation. He has come down, I will suppose, resolved to play a little comedy. The first thing he does—the opening scene in the farce, is when the lover pretends to forget the girl he is engaged to——"

"Oh! You think that, do you?"

"I suggest it. The girl, of course, is highy indignant and threatens to break it off. He pretends to be repentant; but still keeps up the pretence of coldness."

"Go on, pray."

"She gives him two days, in which to recover his old style—his tenderness, you know—the longing in his eyes and the softening of his voice—two days. He asks for a week. She refuses."

"This is, indeed, a beautiful comedy."

"Isn't it? Quite admirable. She refuses to give him more than two days. On the second day he keeps it up still. He pretends love; but when she looks for the old manner, it is gone—love is there no longer. Then she breaks it off altogether."

"Dear me! What a very funny piece it is! How exquisitely ludicrous!"

"Yes. But wait. That brings you to the end of the second act. The third act is a week later—while

the girl is sitting, bitter against her faithless lover, perhaps sad——"

"Oh! 'perhaps sad.' This is where the laughter comes in, I suppose."

"Yes. He comes back, you know, dancing and laughing, all the old love returned—the old ardor and the old passion—and she forgives and——"

"No"—Rosie started to her feet—"she does not. She will never forgive him, never—never! You call this a comedy—you? I thought better of you. I thought you were more human."

"You must forgive him, Rosie. You must—you must," he pleaded with moving voice. "You do not know all, and I cannot tell you; but you must forgive him."

"He has got the most loyal friend in the world," the girl replied, moved by his earnestness; "that is quite certain: and yet—oh! how can I forgive him? See now, Denny, I will promise something because you are his friend. If to-morrow I find my old friend returned to his right senses—if I see the old look in his eyes, and hear the old voice—I will try my best to believe that it has been a horrid dream. Yet, I do not know. It seems as if everything was already gone. I cannot understand how I could love again——"

She left the sentence unfinished.

"I fear," said Denny, "that, after all, I have only made things worse. My comedy was ill-conceived

and impossible. I give up the comedy. Let us try something else."

"You need try nothing more."

"Kit has been very hard at work, thinking like an owl, and as solitary, for three months: he has given up his club and all his pleasant vices: he has been industrious for a long spell: he has changed his style, confound him: paid his debts, and opened a banker's account—he actually has money in the bank. Now, if you know Kit—and you do,—you must know that after such a spell of work he will very soon want a holiday. And so, you see, the new Adam will be put off and the old Adam will return."

But the girl shook her head sadly.

"I can say no more. If I find the old eyes-"

"But suppose—suppose they are not quite the same eyes—suppose you find a difference—could you not reconcile yourself to the change and put it down to the new habits of life, which he will very likely lay aside again in a few days?"

"Oh, don't you see that he would be a different man, and we should have to begin all over again with a certain prejudice to be overcome—an unpleasant memory?"

"You have no insuperable objection to success and ease, if not wealth?"

The girl laughed.

"Objection? You should see how I have lived—in what a world of muddle and of debt. Objection?

Why, it has always seemed to me that the most desirable thing in the world was to be rich—and Kit thought so, too. In his dreams he always began by being rich. And I am sure that nobody would have made a better rich man. And never was there, excepting you yourself, any one who would have made a nobler use of wealth."

"I am glad you have so much to say in his praise."

"Rich people," he used to say, "ought only to exist in order to make other people happy. Did he teach you that doctrine, Denny, or did you teach him?"

"I owe a great deal to Kit—my songs, for instance—more than I can tell you. Some day, perhaps, when this trouble is past and gone, I may tell you things that will surprise you."

"He has taught you so much that you are exactly like him. Your talk is like his—that of the old Kit, I mean. You sing exactly like him, but with a better voice; and you play like him, but with a firmer touch."

"Kit fancied his singing and playing, too, more than a little."

"Yes, he is imaginative. Even small poets have great imaginations in little things. Kit thinks he has a fine voice. I believe he thinks, too, that he has the external appearance of a poet, and is tall and graceful. But that was the old Kit. The new man, who writes thoughtful papers and learned essays,

and works hard all day, cannot have any imagination. My old Kit has gone—where has he gone to?"

"He will come back. In a week or so you will be wondering that you have missed him. He will come back, and be as lazy and as helpless as ever, if you wish: or he shall be as industrious and as successful as you desire."

Rosie shook her head.

"One does not love a man," she said, wisely, "because he is lazy and helpless. Do not think that. At present it seems as if he was gone out of my heart altogether, never to come back. But if he were to come back, and with the old light in——"

She looked up and stopped short, because it was there—the old light that she remembered—a light never to be mistaken or forgotten: a light that never means anything but love: the light that formerly lit up the spectacled eyes of her lazy lover. She dropped her eyes and trembled, blushing.

"You shall see the old light," he murmured softly. "Do you believe that Kit has really forgotten you! Do you think—oh! do you think—that anybody could ever forget you, Rosie!"

She got up quickly, with averted face.

"We will find the others," she said; "I think my affairs have been discussed quite enough."

She led the way out of the church to the ruins, where one or two of the company were exhibiting such rags and shreds of archæological lore as are always trotted out on such occasions: and the rest were listening with the intelligence and interest which may be perceived on the faces of the ladies at a scientific evening in the theatre of the Royal Institution, or, indeed, upon any personally conducted tour of improvement.

They spread the tablecloth on the grass of the Monks' Refectory, and sat round, some on rugs and some on fallen stones, and some on mounds of turf. Here was a change from the droning voice of the sleepy novice. But the walls were used to these things: they were scandalized no longer by the laughter of girls and the music of their voices. Presently, some one—it was the young assistantmaster—produced a banjo, and began to strike upon that musical instrument, and to sing a song, and everybody laughed. Even the teacher in the High School laughed, though the thing was so very unworthy of the profession. Youth, you see, will feast and laugh and be happy whenever it can: and if a row of grinning skulls of the old monks had been strung around the walls, with a legend reminding them that to this complexion must they come at last, they would have feasted and laughed in exactly the same wav.

But Rosie sat quiet beside Sophia Gentry and suffered the others to talk and laugh. Afterward, it was remembered by those who are prophets after the event—a very numerous and wide-spread profession

—that Denny also had intervals of silence, and that he kept glancing furtively at Rosie, as if apprehensive or doubtful. Subsequent events seemed to explain their conduct. They did not really explain anything; but the after-event prophet thought so, which did just as well.

When the sun was getting low they drove home, for the most part in silence. The end of such a day is always rather sad. Witness the vans when they come home from Epping Forest. The soft influences of nature and the close of a festive day incline the heart to melancholy—so that many go home in tears.

Geraldine stood on the terrace to welcome them, when they reached home—with her Robbie Lythe. Mr. Pinder still slept in the smoking-room—and Kit did not show up that evening at all—nor do I know what became of him.

CHAPTER XII.

THE JUDGMENT OF THE SECOND DAY.

THE morning brought the second day, when the lover was to show himself in his ancient manner—to display the gallantry and ardor proper to love—or else——

Rosie waited for him in the library. He ought to have been there first.

It is a bad beginning—a most unfortunate omen—when a girl is kept waiting. What is to be thought of a lover who keeps an appointment a quarter of an hour after the time? Where is eagerness? Where is ardor? Where is the burning desire to be with the object of his worship? Alas! where?

To few women is it given to understand the eagerness and intensity of a man's passion. But any tendency to the other extreme every woman is quick to understand.

Rosie, therefore, waiting for her former lover, was in no mood for trifling.

"So, sir," she began, when he tardily appeared.

He did not at sight of her quicken his step, nor did he run to protest penitence. Not at all. He

walked quietly to the window where she stood, bearing in his hands a roll of manuscript. Because, you see, he proposed, when this little interview should be completed, to go on with his work; and he was perfectly calm and collected, and only wished that it was over and done with.

Therefore, though Rosie began with her "So, sir," she stopped short when she observed the deliberation of his step, and understood by the exhibition of the MSS. that his work was in his mind as well as his love.

"So, sir," she repeated, with increased warmth, when he stood before her, "you have kept me waiting a quarter of an hour. What have you got to say, now that you are here?"

"I am anxious to explain-"

"I want no explanations!" She stamped her foot angrily. "I will have none. If that is all you have to say, you had better go at once."

All she wanted, this poor girl, was to see once more her old sweetheart as he had always been, full of love and of tenderness, love shining in his eyes, love hanging on his lips. And this man could give her nothing but explanations.

"I am anxious to say, Rosie,"—he still pronounced the name with an effort,—"most anxious to assure you that this little misunderstanding of ours can be easily removed by a little patience, a little forbearance for three or four days only. Let me go away now, and come back to you, say, in three or four days."

She laughed scornfully.

"I ask for bread and you give me a stone," she said. "No, sir, I will not wait!—I will exercise no more patience."

"You found me at an—an unfortunate moment. My mind was full of other things."

"Two days have passed since then. It appears that the moment is still unfortunate. This must be the longest moment ever remembered."

"Then, all I say is, if you will not accord me that delay—is that——"

"Well?"

"All I can say is that"—pity the sorrows of this poor young man, about to pronounce a perjury of the most flagrant kind—"that the fondest affection—the most sincere affection,—the—the—tenderest love——"

"Oh, good gracious! Why, you can't even act the part the least bit! Stop this nonsense, sir—I will not be insulted by it."

"Then what in the name of goodness can I say?"

"Anything but that. I expected as much, however. I understood at once—oh! at once—when I ran in to meet you two days ago, that it was all over between us: I saw that for some reason or other you had left off loving me—altogether left off—not begun to distrust and doubt yourself, but left off loving

me for good and all. Not a gleam even of interest was awakened in you. Why now—now—turn your eyes upon me, meet my eyes full. Let me look—so."

He obeyed with evident reluctance, and turned his spectacles to meet her eyes. Alas! these same spectacles, now so cold, had been nearly melted in the past by the burning ardor of his gaze. And now——

"So," she repeated, "nothing more need be said. Your eyes are quite enough. To be sure, your voice and your manner are also enough. But your eyes have settled it."

"I am, I assure you, most unfeignedly sorry. This is a—a—a most unfortunate occurrence. If there is anything I can do or say——"

"There is, I assure you, nothing. Well, it is all over. You are free, and so am I. The Kit I used to know is dead and buried."

"No, no; he is alive!"

"Dead and buried he is, and forgotten—or nearly. Who are you, sir? How do you come to call yourself Mr. Arthur Christopher Cotterel? You are a stranger to me. Yet it is only three or four days that you told me in a letter "—she took it out of her pocket—"you told me—oh! how can I say the words! What does it matter what you told me?"

She tore the letter into fragments and threw them on the ground. One of the fragments, however, flew into his face, lighting on his mouth.

It was as if he had been struck by the girl's hand. "Explain, if you can, how you, a total stranger, dared to tell me that you loved me?"

"I will explain everything in two or three days."

"Not another hour. For the old Kit I was ready to give a lifetime. For you, not a moment. Well, it only remains to give back certain little gifts."

She produced a small packet of silver paper, and opened it with trembling fingers.

"He wasn't rich, my old Kit," she said, her voice trembling, and her lips, as well as her fingers. "He wasn't rich at all, and it is but a little bundle of presents that he could make me. He used to idle away his time, talking nonsense to me, the silly fellow, instead of working for money."

She glanced up quickly, but there was not the least response in her lover's eyes. He looked puzzled, and even bored. His eyes were stony.

She brushed away a tear, and hardened her heart.

"Well, he is gone. Here is a ring he gave me. Of course, I took it off the day before yesterday, when I sawefrom your face that it was all over. A pretty little ring, isn't it? I wonder if you remember what you said—he said—when you—he, I mean, put it on my finger?"

"At this moment," Kit replied, in some confusion, "the words have escaped——"

"Oh!" She snapped the ring in two—it was but a thin little thing—and threw the fragments out of

ä

the window. "Why ask such a man anything? Here is the brooch. Kit said it was his mother's. It isn't pretty; but I valued it because it was his mother's. Take it back. Here is a Trichinopoly chain. Kit bought it, perhaps you may remember, of a sailor at the East India Docks. He gave the man every penny he had in the world for it, thinking to please me, and had to walk all the way home in the rain: that was the kind of thing the old Kit used to do. There are two or three other things, with a history belonging to every one; but you have forgotten them all," she added, still a little wistfully.

"Perhaps not all."

"Tell me one. Tell me what happened when you gave me this pencil-case." She took it out of the parcel and looked at it. "I was so happy that day; I believed in my lover,—nothing makes a girl so happy as to believe in her lover. Kit, if you will only say now again what you said then—in the same voice and with the same light in your eyes. No—'no—it is useless! The man is insensible. He has neither memory, nor heart, nor any sympathy left. He is of marble."

"I am not, indeed; and yet--"

"Take the things, Mr. Cotterel, and let me go at once. The sight of you makes me burn with rage. Let me go quickly,—never dare to speak to me again."

Said Kit—and this was really the most remarkable

thing he did say during the whole of this unpleasant quarter of an hour:—

"I promised I would do the best I could, and a pretty mess I have made of it."

"Very pretty indeed."

They looked at each other in silence for a long space: he with a exasperating bewilderment as if he knew not how things had come about, or what he ought to do; she scornfully.

"It is very curious," she observed, coldly, "how a change in one's feelings about a man alters one's opinion of his character and his appearance. My eyes are opened. I cannot believe now that three days ago I actually thought Kit Cotterel rather a good-looking man. Oh! look in that glass behind you. Is that a figure of Apollo?"

Kit did not turn to survey himself. He only replied gravely:

"I do not want a figure of Apollo. I am quite contented to remain as I am."

"Oh, but the poet of the club ought to look like a poet. And to think that until quite lately I thought him really a poet, with his smoking-room rhymes!"

"The poet of the club? Yes, I believe I was the poet of the club. I had forgotten that little fact. It belongs to the past,—that is, it may possibly belong to the past. As for my personal appearance, what does it matter? A man may look anything, provided his work is good."

÷

"I once invested his habits with romance. It seemed fine for him to be too lazy to do any work—genius, I thought, has eccentricities. It was a mark of genius that he should smoke a pipe all day long with his hands in his pockets. It was characteristic of him to take a wife and condemn her to continual poverty and makeshift, owing to his laziness."

The unhappy Kit opened his lips twice, but said nothing. No sound came forth at all.

"It is as if I have awakened out of a long and bad dream. Oh! from what a miserable lot have I been saved! Mr. Cotterel, I thank you from my heart. It is quite certain that you never did me a greater kindness—that you have never behaved with more unselfish generosity—than at this present moment. I wish you better success, sir, with your next wooing. But your pipe and your beer will make up for the loss of a mistress."

Queen Zenobia herself—the stateliest of Queens—could not have walked down the room with more dignity, though Rosie, poor child, was no more than five foot nothing.

The rejected lover looked after her with a look of perplexity rather than dismay. When she slammed the door—every woman reserves the right of slamming the door in moments of indignation—he whistled. Whistling is not usually regarded as a sign of grief—we give to sorrow words, not whistling. Yet it exactly expressed his mind. What he said by

means of this sound was, in effect: "The other fellow will have all his work cut out to get that young woman back."

The door opened, and Denny cautiously put in his head and looked round the room.

"I watched her from the porch," he said, "I saw her running upstairs. Well, old man, you soon got it over. Made it all right at last, I hope?"

"I did my best," said Kit: "I told you I would."

"What did you make up?" Denny asked anxiously. "We must both be in the same tale. What did you tell the dear girl? I couldn't see her face. Well, it's all right, isn't it?"

"On the contrary, it's all wrong."

"All wrong?"

"Yes. All very wrong indeed. Just as wrong as it can be.".

"I thought you were going to pretend. You told me you had made up something."

"My dear fellow—so I had. But things didn't go as I thought they would. First, you know, I intended to make my little speech about pre-occupation and an over-wrought brain; and then she would have said something, and then I should have said something more, and we should—I suppose—have fallen "—he yawned a little,—"fallen into each other's arms, or something equivalent."

"Something equivalent," Denny grunted. "Go on."

"Well, she never gave me a chance—wouldn't hear me. She was in a rage royal from the beginning. Now I hoped——"

"Oh! you hoped—never mind what you hoped. What did you say?"

"Nothing, I tell you—I said nothing—I told you so before. I couldn't get a word in edgeways. She never gave me a chance."

"What did she say then?"

"She asked me to look at her-that was enough."

"I suppose it was. And your eyes had as much expression as a boiled oyster."

"Your own, my friend. But it was quite enough. I've received a most emphatic dismissal, with plain speaking about my personal appearance and the habits of my life."

"Then now you've made the job complete. Emphatic dismissal!"

"Accompanied, I repeat, by contemptuous reference to personal appearance and the habits of my life—as she knew them. A girl who meant going on again would hardly speak contemptuously of her lover's appearance, I take it."

"What had she got to say about your looks, I should like to know? They used to be good enough for her."

"She seemed inclined to ridicule the figure. Well, for my own part, I am perfectly satisfied with the figure. Compact, I call it," he looked complacently

at his effigy in the glass. "Compact, healthy, well-nourished, useful and—now that I've taken off some of the fat induced by immoderate drinking and laziness—active. No organic disease, anywhere: no weak points that I have discovered: no hereditary tendencies: a frame eminently fitted and eminently designed for a life of hard and unremitting labor."

"So you seem to think."

"As for my habits of life—as she understands them, she is quite right. I don't call it good form myself, to spend the whole of the night and the best part of the day with a lot of fellows who do nothing but talk of the grand things they are going to do."

"If I'd only known what a prig you would become—"

"Let me go on. She also very rightly insisted on the selfishness of marrying a girl when you knew beforehand——"

"I did not know beforehand."

"Well, my friend, you have indeed got your work cut out. I dcn't envy you the job; and if words and looks mean anything at all, there is not a man in the whole world whom that young lady will not marry rather than you."

"I say, what is to be done? Stop preaching, man, and let us consider. Stay, I have it—I have it. Let us change back again, at once. Let us lose no time. Good heavens! Every moment that we put off, is a moment lost,"

"There is your promised article not quite finished," said Kit, "but I won't let that stand in your way. Let us change at once, by all means."

"Where are the materials, then?" Denny was all impatience. "Let us get back, and this evening I will astonish them by the reappearance of the real Kit—none other genuine. Quick, man, quick!"

"The phial is in my pocket. But first I have got to put you into the mesmeric sleep, sit down. Look at me—keep your eyes on mine, and fix your thoughts on me. Now—now—now."

He waved his hands and concentrated his gaze. Denny sat like a patient inhaling ether: passive, yet eager.

After ten minutes of violent exertion, Kit desisted. "It is no use," he said; "something is in the way. What are you thinking of now?"

"I'm thinking of Rosie."

"Pshaw! Think of me."

Again they began. After ten minutes more Denny jumped out of his chair.

"This is fooling. Remember, it was Denny who mesmerized Kit. Let me try."

He tried for a quarter of an hour. The result was the same.

"It is no use," said Kit, "we must give it up."

"I suppose the reason is, that we agreed to remain as we are for three months."

"We can't change now, until the time's up. Only three days more,—courage!"

"Only three days! Only three thousand centuries! And every moment that poor child growing to hate me more and more. Poor girl, what must her sufferings be! My mind is made up!" he cried desperately. "I shall tell her exactly what has happened—that you are not yourself—and I—I—am the real Kit!"

He rushed from the room to carry out his desperate resolve. A second time Kit waited till the door was slammed, and then whistled softly. After this he sat down to his papers and continued his work.

CHAPTER XIII.

"UNDERSTAND ME CLEARLY."

BEHIND the house there lies a wood, a deep thick wood, where in summer the boughs spread interlaced overhead so that the light is softened, and the sun breaks through in shifting gleams and glances like dropping rain. In the autumn the paths are thick with yellow leaves, and at all times are strewn with twigs which crack under the feet as one walks. Hither came Rosie, the nymph bereaved of her lover. She came not to weep, because the time for tears was gone: after the first day there was no room for tears: she came to think. We always say we come to think when we mean that we come to let the mind wander uncontrolled. This is the time when a whole army of thoughts, fancies, memories, and purposes, seize upon the brain and demand space and an interval to occupy it, and do and say and act as they please. At such times one must be alone.

Rosie wandered here alone, such thoughts hurrying, driving, rushing in her brain. At times she came to the edge of the wood, close to the garden. Then she heard the voices of those who played or walked there, and she turned back and plunged again into the depths just exactly as if she had been a nymph in Ovid's "Metamorphoses." But none of Ovid's maids ever received such provocation as this damsel. I know not how long she was alone. It may have been an hour: it may have been ten minutes: thought keeps no count of time. And here Denny presently found her.

"Rosie,"—he spoke in a whisper, though there was nobody to hear him,—"I am come to talk with you. Give me five minutes only."

"If you come as a messenger from Mr. Cotterel-"

"I do in a sense—and yet not what you mean."

"Well then I am not going to listen to you. We agreed yesterday, I believe, that my dead-and-gone love affairs had been discussed enough."

"Yes, but what has happened to-day---"

"It was a natural consequence of what happened before. I don't want to hear anything. Denny—Mr. Stirling—you have been a very kind friend to me—to all of us—don't make me forget all the kindness. Let me go home without mixing you up in my little troubles. You would not, I am sure, desire to make them worse."

"Make them worse? Good heavens! I would die rather——"

"Quite enough said. Will you leave me here, or shall I leave you?"

"One word first,—I want to explain."

"Once more, I will not listen to any explanations. If Mr. Cotterel is unable to explain, surely you would find it difficult. Besides, why do you want to interfere at all in this private quarrel?"

"I must say it—you must hear me. Rosie, you don't know—you don't understand. It is difficult to explain these things. Kit is—I am—that is to say, the real Kit is not the present Kit."

"No-of that I am perfectly certain."

"Of course. He is changed—he agreed to change—now you understand what I mean."

"My Kit is dead and buried and forgotten. I did not need to be told that he is changed. Whether you agreed in the transformation, really matters nothing. Suppose you give up talking about him. He no longer interests me."

Denny made a gesture of despair.

"I cannot make her understand! he cried. "Once more, if you were to see and understand quite plainly that he had returned—quite himself and in his right mind, could you again——"

"Never again. Once for all: never again. And now, if you talk any more about him, I shall have to leave you and go back home. Don't spoil my last days here, Denny," she said in her soft sweet voice. "I have been so very, very happy here. Kit has done his best to spoil my happiness—just at the last—but—but—and if you will only say no more about him, I assure you I can forget him—."

But here she broke down.

"I will do anything you like," he replied, dismally. "You have only to command me. I will say no more, if you are really and truly lost—hopelessly lost—to Kit."

"You are indeed a true friend." The tears rose to her eyes, because he looked and spoke in such evident distress. "Why, you could not be more in earnest if you were pleading for yourself instead of your friend. Oh! if Kit had shown only half the feeling that you have displayed,—but there, if he could have felt it, the occasion would never have arisen. Denny, you are as noble as you are generous, and your friend isn't worth it. He doesn't suffer: he doesn't give the thing a thought. His heart is of stone. Why, I saw all the time he was only thinking what he could make up, and longing to get rid of me. I am sure that at this moment he is calmly sitting over his manuscript, his mind wholly rapt in his work."

"Pleading for myself—I am—for Kit—for myself—in my alter ego."

"Your alter ego? That is what one friend calls another. Well, I shall hear no more pleading—I must hear you, since you will still be talking about him." She turned to go back to the house, but he looked so miserable that she hesitated. "Denny," she said earnestly, "you have been so kind to all of us—you have made yourself so good a brother to us

all—and you seem to take this wretched business of mine so much to heart, that I will try to make you understand how I feel about it."

"Tell me what you can-what you please."

"You talk like a man, you know. How could we ever go on-Kit and I-just as if nothing had happened? The thing is impossible. Between the past and the future there lie two days—the day before yesterday, and this morning. Can I ever, do you think, forget the moment when Kit, my lover-whose last love-letter was in my pocket—refused even to recognize me? Is that possible, do you think?. Well, if it were possible,—if I could acknowledge that his mind was wandering-though one hardly likes lovers whose minds go wandering-how could I get over this morning's interview. Love is dead. Kit was quite ready to protest all kinds of love-but he is a bad actor: for that matter, no actor ever yet put real love into his eyes—his face—his voice—his carriage. It can't be done. Now do you understand?"

"This is terrible."

4

"Oh! he will get over it. And a strange thing has happened to me. If I confess it to you, it is because you are so much his friend that I want you to understand everything. It is, that I really feel relieved now that it is all over. At first I was very sorry. I cried a good deal, with Geraldine, over it, and of course I was horribly, frightfully insulted. Now I am glad to be free. It isn't only that the

transformation has brought a new person altogether—a complete stranger—but I cannot understand how I could ever have thought myself in love even with the old Kit."

"Oh!" Denny groaned. "But you were in love with him?"

"I dare say I thought so. But I seem to have recovered my senses and my eyesight. As for finding my senses, I see that I am poor and likely to remain poor, unless, which isn't likely, I develop some unexpected talent: but if I were to marry this man, who would really do a man's share of work. I should become ten times as poor and a hundred times as miserable. I will bear the burdens that are laid upon me, but not those which are laid upon him as well. And as for recovering my eyesight, I now plainly see that the life he used to lead was selfish and frivolous. How does it help the household if the husband sits up all night talking with his friends! What honor, even apart from money, does a man get who writes little catchy rhymes and sets them to little catchy tunes? That is all that poor Kit ever did. He called himself a poet by profession, when he was but an amateur rhymer. Now, of course, he is a prig, and a complete stranger."

"Oh! But he had higher ambitions."

"It is no use to have higher ambitions if you do not exert yourself to achieve something of them. He was a beautiful dreamer. Oh! yes. I know that

I used to listen to him with the greatest pleasure. He quite carried me away out of myself with his dreams. Now I remember that all his dreams rested on the supposition of being rich. If he were rich he could write the most beautiful things—novels, plays, poems—that the world had ever seen. He was cramped by the horrid thought that he was writing for pay, and to be paid by people who thought of nothing but the commercial value of the work: he wanted to write for a public of one—I should be that one. Then he would make himself a consummate artist. I knew all along that it was nonsense, but it made me happy to listen to him. And I knew all along that he would make my life miserable."

"Yet there was nothing he would not have done to make you happy."

"How can a married woman be happy when there is not money enough? He was ready to do everything for me except the one thing essential—to work for me."

"But he has begun to work. He has been working in earnest for three months. He will keep it up, I am sure he will."

"Very likely. I do not care any longer what he does. He has become, you see, commonplace to me. Nothing is left of him but his short fat figure and his spectacles and round face. He is quite commonplace, a person of ordinary abilities, who thinks he has genius; a man, as I now perceive plainly, of

coarse tastes and low companions: the friend of Bohemians, like Mr. Pinder, who always drinks more wine than is good for him. In his new shape he is even worse. He used to be cheerful: now he laughs no longer. He used to laugh with everybody: now he is as solemn as an undertaker. He talks maxims: he writes philosophical papers: he is a lesser Oliver Goldsmith trying to look like John Stuart Mill."

"Oh!" Denny groaned. "If you only knew-" "I am no longer fond of Bohemia. Perhaps it is my stay here that has put me out of conceit with debt and difficulties. It no more pleases me to think of duns besieging the house. I no longer admire a man who lies down and laments that he isn't rich."

"Rosie-for Heaven's sake-vour words tear me Believe me, I am, myself, the very to pieces. man!"

"Are you?" she laughed, not understanding in the least what he meant. "Man and wife are no longer twain, but one. Yet you and Kit are not man and wife. That you are his very good and loyal friend you have proved in a way that does you honor. But even David and Jonathan did not call themselves each other, did they? Well, I will say no more, because I would not give you pain—who have given me so much pleasure. You shall not think me ungrateful. But you understand-you understand quite clearly, Denny?"

She looked up with soft pleading eyes, and her voice was so tenderly caressing that the young man's knees trembled.

"There is no room left for any mistake. What you want is impossible—impossible! Plead his cause no longer."

"You do not understand," Denny stammered.

"I don't want to understand. In a day or two I go home again. It is not pure, unalloyed happiness that awaits me on my return. But I shall be happier than I was, partly because I shall have my stay here to look back upon. It has been a very sweet and beautiful time. For once in my life I have lived in plenty. Only for once to be satisfied—to have no care about the next week's rent—it will be a memory. Let it remain a memory without a regret. Believe me, O you kind giver of this feast! if I were to go back to that lover of mine-who doesn't want me back—if I could persuade myself once more that I loved him—if I were to become the wife of this lazy, self-indulgent creature, the bitterness of the lifelong regret to follow would swallow up the happiness and the gratitude."

She spoke with an unaccustomed gravity. When she had finished she held out her hand. Denny stooped and kissed it without reply. Then they turned and parted, Rosie going back to the house, and Denny staying in the wood. He, like Rosie,

wanted to think. His brain was filled with ten thousand devils fighting, struggling, and trampling on each other.

"I am a commonplace person," he murmured.
"My associates and boon companions are a company who drink away their brains: we dream of things we shall never accomplish: my appearance is ridiculous: my future is certain: failure is written on my brow: selfishness is the key-note of my character. It is all over then. She could never forget these things—never, never! Not even if I were to write the whole of the thoughtful magazines for twelve months on end. Never! And I love her a thousand times as much as ever. What to do? What to say? Where to turn?"

For the first time in the memory of the oldest visitor, Denny did not appear at luncheon. His place was empty. But Kit was there, calm, philosophic, and not in the least disturbed by the events of the morning. He looked round the table with a front of brass, and caught the eye of the girl who had told him so many home-truths without showing the least sign of emotion. His eyes were stony: there was neither love nor memory, not even common interest, in them. He did not care—he truly did not care that he had been dismissed. This knowledge naturally did not decrease the girl's bitterness.

The talk fell upon some topic of the day, one of those subjects on which ordinary people converse, with the ideas of the day before yesterday's leading article. But Kit-this long-hidden Kit-knew. He talked as if he had been on the spot and in the thick of things. He talked like one in the inner ring, and with such grasp of the subject, and a knowledge so real, that Geraldine glowed with pleasure only to see her old friend was at last showing the stuff which she always knew was in him. But Rosie, who had no interest in the questions, and cared no more about the speaker, listened unmoved and without admiration. Besides, her thoughts were in the wood, where she left the truest and most loyal of friends. What did it mean, this passionate pleading for a friend who, she now remembered, had never once spoken of him during all the time of her acquaintance with him? Why this wonderful fervor of friendship for one who certainly had got on very well without him? Besides—besides, what meant that look in the advocate's eyes? Can one plead another's cause so thoroughly as to reproduce the unmistakable look of love for vicarious and not for personal purposes? I do not say that the girl formulated the difficulty in these words, but the difficulty was there.

"My dear," whispered Sophia the sympathetic, "you look worried. What is it?"

"Not that," she answered, with the precision of a thought-reader. "I am free—and I am glad, not sorry. But, Sophia dear, I think that the sooner we are all home again and quietly at work, the better it will be for some of us."

CHAPTER XIV.

"TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELVES."

SOPHIA GENTRY sat under a tree in the churchvard finishing a water-color sketch of the old tower. She was one of those who are always at work, even though her work no longer sold. I am told that some benefactor to Art goes round, at regular intervals, and secretly buys up all the unsold pictures at sixpence the square inch or even less - some artists being penny-an-inchers—and then makes a bonfire of them all in some secluded spot. year there accumulate stacks, immense stacks, waiting to be burned. Consider—ten thousand pictures sent every year to the Royal Academy: as many to the Salon: as many more to the other exhibitions a hundred thousand new pictures painted every year -a million pictures in ten years-and not a million houses in the whole world where pictures are bought and hung! As for poor old Sophia, she had contributed far more than her share to the canvases unbought, rejected, and unhung. This afternoon, she made, herself, a picture far prettier than any she was likely to paint. She had thrown off her hat, and

sat bareheaded. She might have represented the Muse of Painting grown old, her hair white, her fair face lined with crows' feet. Yet, because she represented the Muse and had spent all her life in meditation over her Art, she was still beautiful, serene, never weary of her work. Some artists manage to look the part so much better than they play it. Beside her, on a flat tombstone, sat Geraldine. They were talking, and the elder lady prattled on, as painters do at their work; unconnectedly, with pauses of silence, without much thought. They were talking about people, which is the favorite and sometimes the only subject of conversation with all of us, men or women.

"And so, my dear," said Sophia, twisting her head about so as to get the full effect of her last touches, "we had better, after all, leave the matter alone."

"I shall speak to him—once—about it," said Geraldine. "Surely I know Kit well enough to speak. We ought to be quite satisfied that their decision is wise for both of them. It would be dreadful if they were making some terrible mistake which a word might set right."

"I have seen, ever since he came down, that he no longer cares about her. My dear, I think that the boy has become so earnest in the pursuit of literature that he has no room for any other thoughts. I saw the first evening, at dinner, that he wasn't thinking about the poor girl at all. He was distrait: he

looked bored: when I have talked with him I have found a constraint. And you?"

"No—he is quite changed, that is true; but I find no constraint. He talks to me,—perhaps not so freely; but then not so boyishly. As for Rosie, she declares she is really glad to be free. I wonder if she deceives herself?"

"I believe not. Rosie was at first indignant, and no wonder. Now, she is indifferent."

"How can any girl who has once loved Kit ever become indifferent to him? But of course I knew him so long ago. To me he is always interesting."

Sophia stared sharply at her face. No—there was nothing behind: the girl's calm face spoke of no earthly passion.

"Is Kit thinking of some other girl?" she asked, still half suspicious.

"I believe not. He is thinking of his work."

"Work is a fine servant but a bad mistress," said Sophia, shading her eyes to catch the effect. "There is no touch of Venus in such a mistress. My dear—here he comes. He looks serious enough for a converted clown. Only think, how that solemn phiz used to light up with smiles unnumbered! Oh! he is too much converted. You must bring him back half-way at least."

Kit lifted the latch of the gate and walked across the churchyard to join them. He certainly did exhibit a most remarkable solemnity. "For once," said Sophia, "you have torn yourself from your work. Take care, my son—life is not all work. There should be society in it—and a great variety of other interesting things."

"Yes-very likely. I came to ask a question."

"As many as you please, my dear Kit."

"The old man Pinder told me yesterday, being a little in his cups, a very queer story. It affects Denny Stirling—though he knows—or knew—nothing about it."

"What is the story?"

"It is about the boy, Robbie Lythe. He says that you know the story. About his father and about Denny's uncle—the man who made all the money."

"Oh! that old story. I thought you must have heard it, Kit. You know it, Geraldine?"

"Oh!" she replied carelessly, "I have heard there was a story—an old quarrel—a great wrong done, I believe; but I have never paid any attention to it."

"Yes," said Sophia, "there was a story; but it does not concern any of us. Robbie's father, you know, went downhill very fast toward the end—poor dear Tom! You young people do not understand that we also have been young. The time seems so long ago, yet we have been young, like you. When we started on the race there was Sam Stirling, Denny's uncle—Tom Lythe,—Harry Pinder—dear me! how ambitious and how clever he was in those days—and a great many more. And now where are

they? In the race of life, my dears, it is a very odd thing to notice how the horses all set off running different ways.".

"But the story?"

"Oh! the story. Well, what matters the story? Robbie knows nothing about it. Nobody now can tell whether it is true or whether it is false."

"Pinder says," Kit persisted, "that Mr. Stirling stole an invention—stole it—and passed it off as his own, and so made the whole of his great fortune."

He spoke with a heat that seemed hardly called for by the circumstances.

"I think he got it, somehow. Whether he stole it or not; I cannot say. Perhaps he bought it."

"But—to leave this man to get poorer, and to do nothing for his son——"

"My dear Kit, the thing is done, and cannot be undone. I don't think, myself, that it is right to buy as cheap as you can and to sell as dear, because in such a transaction somebody must be robbed: but then I am not in business. At all events, it is always being done. Every day a picture is bought for a pound or two, and afterward sold for hundreds. Every day a book is bought for next to nothing and brings in a great income for years. We cannot help it," continued the wise woman, "if men are so foolish as to sell their property for nothing."

"Yet, if it were true, half of the estate, at least, should be given to this boy."

"Nay—nay—consider. Poor Tom Lythe, with all his cleverness, could never have made a hundred pounds for himself. He was born to make fortunes for other people——"

"Yes, I say, the half, at least the half of the estate," Kit insisted with strange pertinacity.

"Robbie might be made perfectly happy with much less than that," said Geraldine. "If he could only be taken from the City and sent to the South for the winter, he might pull through and last many years. It seems a little thing; but it is impossible."

"Alas! it is indeed," said the artist. "Unless I could sell my pictures."

"It shall be done, Geraldine." Kit's face warmed up in quite the old way. It was just so that he spoke when he built up in dreams. "It shall be done for him—I promise that it shall be done—a tardy act of partial reparation."

"Well, but," said Sophia, "there is no necessity for you to make reparation. What have you to do with Mr. Stirling's injustices?"

"It shall be done, however."

"Oh! they said the old Kit was quite gone," said Geraldine. "As if he could quite go. Sophia dear, he has got fifty pounds in the bank, and he is going to give them all to Robbie. I can read his thoughts, you see."

Kit smiled, but gravely, and he said no more for the moment about Robbie. But he sat down between them and, very much in the old manner, began to talk.

"Let us be confidential," he said. "When we go back to town and to work, how are our prospects?"

"Gloomy, my son," said Sophia. "They are very gloomy. Find me, if you can, some quiet and delightful old almshouse: there must be a chapel, of course; a garden and a sun dial. I should not in the least mind going into an almshouse, provided there were these essentials. I suppose they would let me bring my own easy-chair and a few little pretty things. I should make myself quite happy, and I should have no anxiety. But I confess that the prospect—" A look of pain crossed her face.

"Are things so very bad?"

"They could not be worse. Then there is Rosie—poor child!—she has not been making any real way lately. I do not know what will become of Rosie. Her heart is not in her work. It used to be with you, Kit."

"It is no longer with me, I assure you. And you, Geraldine?"

"Well, Kit, if young people can be admitted to almshouses too, I should like a cottage next to Sophia's. But we have had a most delightful holiday. Whatever happens in the future, we shall remember this time. And it finishes, Kit, in the best way possible—with your success."

He smiled gravely again and then, after a few moments of silence, he rose and walked slowly away.

"Kit's new dignity as yet sits strangely upon him," said Geraldine.

"We loved the old Kit, my dear and we have not yet got accustomed to the new. Oh! I confess that it is better that he should wake up and work. It is more dignified. And he is very, very clever; but he is not so picturesque—and oh! my dear, he is not so affectionate. Denny, who is a darling, has all Kit's old affectionate way. Pity he is so rich!"

CHAPTER XV.

THE LAST DAY.

THE last day came: it always comes in the long run—this abominable last day—and then we discover, with Augustine, how short is that which hath an ending. Even the old, old man, the aged, aged Antediluvian, lamented that man should be cut off before a paltry thousand years were reached.

The last day of the holidays is, of all the days that come and go, the saddest. Going-away day is not nearly so bad: it is the last day, when one feels that the merry company are going to part immediately; that this is the last chance we shall have to say what we ought to say to each other; that the time can never quite come over again in the same way as we have enjoyed it. Other holidays there will be, let us hope; other sweet places—other pleasant companies—await us still in the halting-places along the weary Haj, the pilgrim's way: but there will be something missing-some vanished facesome loss. The play-time is over—the holy playtime when we have all been so good, when no one has defrauded his neighbor, and there have been no hard-forced bargains, no fighting over the plunder,

no robberies—in a word, no business. It is over, and on the morrow we must go. Let us wander hand-in-hand along the shore, and watch the rolling of the waves, and the white crests of the flying horses in the bay, and the vessels that pass to and fro: it is our last chance before we go back to the way of war and the windy talk of men. For six weeks we have been in this Garden of Eden: let us take one more walk in it before we go back to the town, and the stones of it, the smoke of it, the noise of it.

It was a melancholy party that gathered round the breakfast-table that morning; but the saddest and gloomiest of all the faces was that of their host, the hitherto cheerful Denny.

"You reserve your best compliment for the last day, Denny," said Sophia. "You are cast down on our account, because we are sorry that it is over."

"No," he said. "Am I not cast down on my own?

A horrid depression weighs me down. The most
delightful time I have ever had is over, and it can
never come again—never—never!"

"Why should it never—never—never come again?" she echoed, smiling. "Why are you so sure that it cannot come again?"

"That I cannot tell you; but it is gone, and another time as good can never come again."

They all sighed with one consent—a deep, harmonious, melancholy sigh.

"We shall have it to remember," said Sophia, "in

the cold, dark days of winter—in the fogs of the London streets we shall remember this lovely house, and the sunshine lying on the lawns—and the deep woods and the heath—we shall remember all."

"We shall remember all," they murmured with tearful eyes.

"And we shall remember—Denny," said Sophia, laying her hand in his.

His eyes softened. Manhood forbids the cloud to fall in rain save in moments of the deepest emotion.

"But it is gone," he said. "What goes with it besides I shall find out to-morrow. Come,"—he looked up and laughed the ghost of a laugh—"what must be, always is. Let us take sweet counsel together. We have a day before us—what shall we do with it? Let us make it like a Foresters' Galaday at the Crystal Palace—brimful of things to do and things to see. Pity we haven't a steam merrygo-round! We will make it a memorable day."

When the programme was complete, Denny left the girls to carry out the preliminary arrangements—stage properties are required for the simplest programme—and betook himself, his face lengthening with every step, to the library, where, as he expected, he found Kit hard at work, as usual.

"Old man," he said, laying his hand on his shoulder, "hadn't we better audit our accounts, so to speak—learn exactly what we have to face to-morrow?"

"Yes; I was going to say much the same thing.

We've rather avoided the difficulty, haven't we? I am finishing off this paper for you. I think you will acknowledge that it is, on the whole, the best thing you have done."

He took up a pile of MSS., and fondled the leaves affectionately. "I cannot bear to let it go out of my It is closely-reasoned and—— But you shall see-you shall see. I shall send it in for you to-night."

"No, my friend," said Denny; "you will keep it and send it in under your own name, if it is to go in at all. But we will talk of this presently. let me render a account of my stewardship."

"Don't vex me with the details of what you have given away."

"Very well. But something you must know, otherwise you may be embarrassed; for, of course, you will have to drop down easily. Where shall I begin?" He sat down on the opposite side of the table and opened a drawer. "Here you will find some papers which you had better read."

"I don't think I shall. In general terms, you have been doing as much mischief with the money as you could."

"Yes, my ideas of the rich man's responsibilities are not yours. I am not a political economist. Man, I find, obeys none of your laws. May I expound the views of an ignorant person?"

[&]quot;Pray go on."

"I look in the glass and I say, 'Behold humanity!' I find that all I myself ask of life is, to be happy. I have no desire to work. I want love, fellowship, play, talk, music, wine, sunshine, woods, lawns, and pleasant places. These simple things make up life; but mostly love, fellowship, and play-I ask for nothing more. I want, I say, to be happy. Build me a system of economics upon that foundation, and I will look at it. Recognize the universal desire. Let work be only necessary work, and play the thing to which it leads. But you cannot do this: philosophers have never known what happiness is. There is not even any verb which expresses the universal desire; we have to make a verb. I want-to-behappy: thou wantest-to-be-happy: he or she wantsto-be-happy; we all want-to-be-happy."

"Political economy works for the general, not the individual, happiness."

"Humanity doesn't care for the general, but for the individual. You who are rich may—nay, you must—make others happy who are not. If you refuse, my Dives, you shall be deprived of your treasures; yea, you shall be cast into a lake of fire."

"Suppose you take all my treasures and spend them in making fifty people happy, as you call it that is, in giving them things which they have not earned,—what then?"

"Why, then they will have been happy. What else do you want?"

"For a little while."

"Life itself is but for a little while. To be happy—to enjoy the things which we cannot earn, even for a day—is something in the brief span of life. Make us happy, Dives. We die and are forgotten—we and our works: the next generation follows with its works. The world repeats itself. Some men work and make money; some work and do not. Outside things change: shirt-sleeves put on broadcloth; broadcloth is exchanged again for shirt-sleeves. Always there is one cry, 'Let us be happy—give us love, fellowship, and play.' Thanks to the chance that came to me, I have given playtime to a few."

"And now they must go back to work again no better off, but only the worse, because more discontented."

"When I took over the temporary charge," said Denny, returning to the question of his stewardship, "you were giving nothing at all to anybody."

"I was not. I support no cause, no society, no charity. Men must learn to combine. By combination everything can be effected; without it, nothing. Men must work out their own salvation for themselves. You cannot impose advancement; it must come from below. I strive for nothing but what can be applied to the whole community at the same time, such as education., and the teaching of principles and combination."

"Very good. You will therefore be gratified to find what a quantity of admirable institutions you have assisted."

Kit groaned.

"As if," he said, "any amount of benevolence will alter law. The more you bolster up the weak, the greater will be the number of the weak. You relieve one poor gentlewoman, you take from her the necessity of providing good work, and you offer a temptation to a thousand others to be careless."

"Inst so."

-

"I will go abroad again—I will go anywhere to escape the consequences of this folly."

"It will take you a long lifetime, my friend, to get rid of the character which I have built up for you in three months. For instance, you told me once that you suspected every girl of loving you for your money. Now, with this beautiful new character, you will have no difficulty in finding a girl to love you apart from your money, because, you see, I have made you human and pitiful. Once, I myself——But that is gone. . . ." He sighed. "I think I have no more to tell you. Here are the papers. You are a little poorer than you were. I do not think I have spent much more than a year's income for you. Your solicitors began by expressing astonishment."

"They will have to be astonished a second time."
"And have ended by expressing admiration. The

sum of it all is, that I have made several people happy. They were poor and in misery-misery un-They are young people as well as old deserved. Whatever you do in the future, you can people. never escape from their gratitude. Ho! ho!" put his hands in his pockets and, laughed. "Dives, who was going to drive Lazarus from his door lest he should pick up the crumbs—a thing dead against the modern economy,—has gone out and invited Lazarus to step inside: he has placed him in a warm bath, dressed his bad places with a little sulphate of zinc or vaseline, clothed him in a beautiful white robe, with a crown of roses, and set him down to a feast. Wonderful!"

"Wonderful, indeed! Yet the laws remain."

"And your example—the example of three months—to shame all rich men in every country."

"I shall go abroad till it is all forgotten. Meantime, however, I have not done so very badly for you."

"I know what you have done for me. You have pledged me to a pile of work which I cannot execute: you have converted me into a monster of industry: you have turned me into an orator and an advocate of impossible things. I shall be invited by editors to continue those papers which cause their numbers to be bought and to be talked about. Very well, I shall just do nothing: I shall sit down. I shall just go to the Club as if these things hadn't happened—

that is what I intend to do. In a week or two the men will leave off chaffing."

"Nonsense! You will—you must—carry on the work I have started."

"Carry on that work? I? Go about lecturing and preaching? Never."

"This paper which I have finished for you-"

"Keep it for yourself—I shall go back to the rhyming and the little journalism; it is all I am fitted for. You can carry on this blessed work of yours under your own name."

"That is impossible. My papers are absolutely identified with your name. Consider, a splendid beginning like this must not be thrown away. The principle——"

"I don't care twopence for the principle."

"Unless—this would be a way out of the difficulty—unless you would allow me to continue, you know, writing under your name."

"Certainly not," said Denny: "I might perhaps, though it is not likely, become a cold-blooded philosopher, but I will preserve, if you please, a little honesty."

"I beg your pardon, of course. Then it is all lost and thrown away—all that I have done in the last three months!"

"What does that matter? What would it matter if everybody's work were lost and thrown away?"

"Oh!" cried Kit, fondling his precious manu-

script. "Can you not carry on some of the work? Will you suffer it all to be thrown away?"

"I can't help it. I could no more carry on this work of yours than you could write my songs. Be resigned: worse things have come out of this confounded exchange than the loss of your confounded work."

"We ought to have considered at the outset: we ought to have laid down rules. However"—Kit sighed deeply,—"you are coming back to the old necessities, the old stimulus. I return to the load of wealth, and to work without a purpose or an aim. How much I envy you!"

Denny laughed scornfully.

"You envy me! If you only knew what a beautiful time I have had—with what melancholy of spirit I return—you would not envy me."

"As for me, my friend: in return for my three months of work, I can forgive you even your College."

"And I, for my part, can forgive you even for changing my style—I can forgive everything when I think of this long spell. I have had absolutely no work to do for three months. To think of it! In fact, I shall always be thinking of it. You've been fagging and trudging and whipping-up people to make them think as you want them to think: I've been sitting in my easy-chair, just making them do what I want them to do: I lift my little finger, and

lo! this House of Holiday for these poor girls! To make people happy—there is no other happiness."

"I fear I have not, perhaps, been so considerate as I should have been," said Kit, softened. "I ought to have known how lazy you were. But, indeed, the chance of work so filled me with a kind of rage that I have not been able to stop, and I quite forgot you, your style, your reputation, and everything."

"And I too," said Denny, "have been to blame, perhaps. But remember, I, who never had a sixpence to spare, found myself the master of millions. I ought to have considered your opinions more. Forgive me."

They shook hands over their reconciliation.

"And when you are back again," said Denny, "will you really do nothing with your money for anybody?"

"I adhere to my principles. But," he added, with a little confusion, "I find that there must be exceptions made, when one gets to know people—when one learns certain stories—in short there is that boy, Robbie Lythe."

"You have heard the story about him: I hoped that you would not hear it. Perhaps it isn't true."

"True or not, the boy shall be cared for. Send for him—promise for him whatever you please."

"Yet, consider, the example of his sufferings would be so useful a lesson to all his friends." "Then there is Sophia Gentry: you shall do what you will for her. Do not suffer her to have any fear for the future."

"Yet, consider, the poverty of this poor lady cannot but teach other ladies to be less incompetent."

"I am afraid I have botched that for you; but, indeed, I could not help it."

"No; that is botched indeed." There was no necessity to name the business. "Man! I don't care twopence for the other difficulties—I can get over them in a month. But this is different. What is to be done with this? I see no way out of it; I shall never get over it, I fear. Kit Cotterel is packed off—bundled out—cleared out like a sack of rubbish. She despises him: she hates him. I shouldn't mind her hatred, because hatred might always turn again to love; but she despises him. Love can never survive contempt. I am done for—done for. The only thing that made me look forward to the exchange of to-morrow was the return to Rosie. And that is impossible. It is impossible—it is quite impossible," he repeated for the third time.

"Well"—Kit showed little sympathy with this aspect of the case—"suppose you have lost her: after all, there are other girls."

[&]quot;None that I want."

[&]quot;Why, man, look round you. Have you no eyes?"

[&]quot;Except for Rosie, none."

- "There is one girl in this house as far above Rosie Romaine as——"
 - "Who can be above her?"
- "You have known her all your life—you played with her: why, you used to tell her all your ambitions and your plans."
 - "You mean Geraldine?"
- "Of course I mean Geraldine. You have had this beautiful, this sympathetic, this divine girl beside you all these years, and you actually have not fallen in love with her!"
- "Fall in love with Geraldine?" Denny laughed pleasantly. "That is quite as impossible as to win back the other. We have always been friends too close for love. I used to tell her everything, as you say—my little ambitions, in the days when I still had ambitions. That was before I joined the Club and took to writing songs for the amusement of the members. Poor, dear Geraldine! I fear I have been a sad disappointment to her. She would persist in expecting great things of me. But, in love with Geraldine—that would be impossible."

"Can there be such a man?" Kit asked of the Heavens and the wide, wide world—gazing around him.

"Besides, there was Rosie—little Rosie—the plague and torment of my life: we quarrelled every other day, and made it up again with kisses. Poor, dear Rosie—and now I have made her heart bleed. Poor child! What can I say? what can I say?"

CHAPTER XVI.

THE LAST EVENING.

It seemed understood as the day went on that everybody was also to have a few minutes' private talk with Denny. He held a kind of reception in the library, one following the other at intervals. Some came to thank him for private and separate kindnesses—how else could so many new frocks have come into existence? Some came to thank him for the lovely time they had had. Some came to say that they were going back to hard and ill-paid drudgery with new courage and hope. Some spoke with tears. Not one but spoke out of a full heart.

Among them came Mr. Pinder. It was half-anhour or so before luncheon time, a period of the day when this good man was always most depressed. His latest drink—unless, as sometimes happened, he had taken a glass of beer in the morning—dated ten or eleven hours back, and he was therefore at dead low tide.

"I am better for my stay," he said, though in the whole course of a long life he had never been anything but perfectly well and strong. "But the Theatre calls loudly for me to return. There are

new pieces coming out everywhere. I must get back to work."

"Well, work seems to agree with you."

"It is not work," said the critic, "that hurts a man, it is not getting enough work. When one is seventy, the younger men cut in and take the best part of the work. It is the universal law. The world belongs to the young—and to the old man who has not been able to save, there is an evil that the physicians cannot cure." He glanced at a cheque-book lying on the table. Perhaps it had already been used for some of those women, who would wheedle this poor young man out of his last farthing. "Cannot cure," he repeated in hollow tones.

Denny laughed.

"I think I know one remedy," he said. "An alleviation, at least. Come, old chap, how much will you borrow? How much shall I lend?"

The Fine Art critic hesitated. With such a chance one should not be too modest. Yet he hesitated. Then he blushed rosy-red—see how young doth Art still keep the heart!—and boldly plunged.

"I would borrow," he said, "no more than my needs demand, no more than I can repay. A man may borrow without loss of self-respect." Perhaps he meant that the loss of the self-respect came in with the repayment. "Lend me, my friend,—lend me—thirty pounds."

When he left the room with that cheque in his pocket, his conscience smote him because he hadn't made it fifty.

Then came Robbie Lythe. As yet he had not heard what was to happen to him, and he was plunged in melancholy at the prospect before him.

"Understand clearly, Robbie boy"—for he stood in a dream, not able to realize what was given to him—"you shall never go back to the City. You are free—you have no work to do. In the winter you shall go to Egypt, or the Riviera, or Algiers: in the summer you shall write verses and live among your friends. You are to have an income of whatever will be found sufficient for everything."

"I cannot understand. You do not mean it!"

"Go, Robbie. Tell Geraldine, and ask her to interpret and tell you what it means. Go—you are a free man."

Then Geraldine herself came.

"Oh!" she said, "what is this that you have done for Robbie? Is it all true—quite true? Denny, you have saved his life! Oh! and I thought you so cold, because you must have known that he would die if he went back to his work, and yet you offered to do nothing. Yet why should you? Robbie is nothing to you. To Kit and to me he has been a great deal always. We love him. But he has been nothing to you, which makes your kindness the more wonderful."

"That is settled then, and we need no more thanks; and perhaps the boy will grow stronger in time. Geraldine, is it really, do you think, all over between Kit and Rosie?"

"I fear so. He is quite cold about it. And she is quite determined."

"Do you think that time-"

"No. I am sure that time will never help. It is a rupture complete. She has quite given him up, and that without an apparent struggle. She does not seem even to suffer any pain. It is as if Kit, who is so much changed, is no longer the man she loved."

Denny made no reply.

In the afternoon a little drawing-room comedy, written by Denny, was performed by the author and by Rosie. It came off with great applause—never had Rosie played any part better. Then dinner, which followed the comedy, was animated and even gay. After dinner they had a little music and singing.

When that began, Kit, who could never now be made to play or sing—he, who formerly had been always singing, stepped out of the room into the garden. Here he found Geraldine alone. Perhaps he knew that she was there.

"I was thinking," she said, "things turn out so strangely. We come here expecting nothing but a few weeks' holiday, and the whole current of our lives is changed. We leave you in London, and you are suddenly transformed. We find here another copy of your old self, as bright and clever—and sometimes as careless and frivolous. We come with heavy hearts, thinking that nothing could save poor Robbie, and, behold! his life is at least prolonged, and he will have no more anxiety. When we came, you were in love and Rosie was happy. Now——"

"Now, Rosie is no longer in love and I am happy. Never mind about Rosie or the past. Let us talk—of ourselves—Geraldine."

There was a change in his voice which ought to have given her warning. But she was one of those girls who do not easily notice such warnings.

"In the old times I used to walk and talk with you and tell you my little thoughts."

"They were great thoughts, Kit."

"And then I began to make songs—those fatal songs!—and the ambitions disappeared, and you have been ashamed of me ever since."

"Disappointed—not ashamed, Kit."

"The old times. It is pleasant to think and talk of them, is it not? before Rosie—before anything else came between us. She is gone now, and I am free. Geraldine, we are free."

Just then the touch of a manly hand fell upon the piane in the drawing-room, and Denny's voice was heard carolling a song—one of Kit's old songs.

She is not a country damsel, but a sweet
And a dainty maid of lordly London town:
She cannot call the cows, and her feet
Seldom stray on breezy moor or lofty down:
She never carried milk pails on her head,
And she cannot churn the butter or the cheese;
She never tossed the hay or made the bread,
And I think she'd be afraid to drive the geese.

"Listen!" said Geraldine. "If it were not for the voice, which is not yours, one might say that here was Kit himself enjoying the thing that he once seemed most to love—the applause of those who heard him sing. Why, the song is yours! You wrote it two or three years ago and showed it to me. I thought at the time that to go on writing such easy trifles in rhyme was quite unworthy of your powers, and my heart sank, I remember, because you were so proud of the lines. But I was afraid to say what I thought. And you were already twenty-five."

"And now I am twenty-seven. Time to change, was it not?"

The singer went on with his foolish ditty, rolling it out as if he loved the rhyme, and the music and his own voice, and as if everybody else must love them all, too:

Upon the sunny side of the street,
Where the lovely things in stately shops are shown,
There I linger when my purpose is to meet
This shepherdess of lordly London town.
And her cheek is just as rosy, and her eyes
Are just as bright as any maid can show,
And sure no country miss in such a guise,
And apparelled with such dainty art, could go.

"O Kit! And all the time you were building of air and light, just as when you began. But your temple was becoming, alas! more and more like a public-house, and your muse more and more like a barmaid. O Kit! and we who loved you and hoped so much of you!"

Then the singer's voice rose again, and he sang the third verse.

She's as pretty and as witty as she's good;
She is sunny as the sunshine, and as free;
She will lose her heart some day—or she should—
. But I'm sure I hope she won't, except to me.
For her sweet sake I love both square and street;
Yea, all the streets of lordly London town;
And her first and Christian name is Marguerite,
And her surname will—perhaps—become my own.

"When I read those lines to you, Geraldine," said Kit, with softened voice—yet she suspected nothing, —"was it in the Square garden?"

"Yes; and in May, when the lilacs filled the air and the laburnum was in blossom."

"And—and—was I mad? was I dreaming? Did no thought cross your mind, Geraldine—playmate and friend—that the words might have a—a—meaning—a deeper meaning between you and me, I mean?"

"No—Kit—why? They were a song written by you—only a song. Besides——"

"Sometimes men get mad and do mad things. Sometimes they pass over the flowers lying at their feet and go to pick flowers not half so sweet in other fields. Sometimes——"

"Kit, I don't know you to-night. What are you saying?"

"It is because I don't know myself. Geraldine, it is because I am free."

"Free?"

"I am free—and I have awakened at last." He caught both her hands and held them tightly. "Oh! blind—blind! Geraldine, it is you I love—you—you!"

"Kit, let me go. Oh! Kit, you must not."

"I must—I will! Forgive me for the wasted years. They shall be wasted no longer. You shall guide me and inspire me, my dear."

She resisted no longer while he held her in his arms and kissed her.

He forgot everything: the explanations that would have to be made—the approaching return to his own personality—the risks and the difficulties—he was quite carried away.

"Oh! Kit," the girl murmured. "Are you sure—are you really sure—that Rosie no longer. . . . Oh! what will she say? And on the very day after."

"It shows the sincerity of the separation: it shows the reality of my love. Dear, let us not think of Rosie. Let us talk of the future. Let us talk of love."

"My dear," said the happy lover half an hour

afterward. "There will be a great deal to tell you in a day or two. Perhaps you will be surprised—even distressed at first."

"No," she said, "you cannot distress me, Kit."

"It is about Denny Stirling and myself. You have noticed a certain resemblance. Do you like him?"

"I like him for his generosity. He is certainly a most generous man. But he wants earnestness."

"If he were to become suddenly earnest, could you—do you think a girl might love him?"

"Perhaps. I do not care to ask. As for mewhy what a question!"

"What if he were to become earnest?" Kit persisted.

"Kit, can't you understand that some things are impossible under any circumstances?"

"But you knew me when I was in the same idle vein"

"Yes, and I knew you before. I knew of what great things you are capable, Kit."

The lover suddenly let her hand, which he had been holding, fall and walked away.

The girl sat waiting for him, wondering what was in his mind. Presently he came back.

"Geraldine," he said, his voice constrained. "Geraldine—whatever happens—we have had this evening. . . . Oh! my dear—my dear."

"This," said Denny, panting, "is the most delightful waltz I have ever had."

His partner sighed. "And now there will be no more dances," she said.

- "Why no more dances?"
- "Because there never are any. Who is to give a dance among us? Why, we all live in cheap lodgings. You can't dance in cheap lodgings. Shall we have one more turn?"

Geraldine was playing, and over the piano Kit leaned, watching her with yearning eyes.

- "There"—as the music stopped—"that waltz is another thing of the past."
 - "Shall you remember it?" Denny whispered.
 - "I shall remember the whole of this day."
- "Let us go outside. It is cool. We may pursue our studies in Natural History. Perhaps we shall find that glowworm."

Rosie hesitated—with the usual consequences.

- "Tell me once more," said Denny, "would it be quite impossible—even if Kit came back—his once self—his former self?"
- "It is very good of you to persist in favor of your friend; but I have already told you a dozen times—it is quite impossible."
- "Not if he came dancing and laughing—with the old light in his eyes."
 - "Oh! if you still persist—"

She turned as if she was going back to the house.

"No-no! Oh! you don't understand. Rosie, I

have never, never ceased for a single moment to love you."

"You?"

"You are horribly mistaken. It is not Kit who has ceased to love you."

"No—he is changed. I believe he is changed into you. I don't understand what you are talking about."

"He is—he is changed. It is I who love you now. Rosie, best and sweetest of girls, it is I who love you always—always."

He folded her in his arms just as Kit had been wont to do, and kissed her just in Kit's old form—with the same ardor and the same impetuosity.

"Oh!" she murmured, "what does it mean? Denny, how can you love me, when you know that I am only just released from Kit."

"I am none other than Kit."

"How can you say such things? You are Denny." He held her in his arms.

"How shall I make her understand?" he said.

"There will be a time for explanation next week—
many weeks after next week—only believe that I love you, Rosie, better than you were ever loved before."

"But oh!" she said, "you are so rich and I am so poor—and they will say——"

"What do I care what they say? Besides, I am

not so rich. Oh! I will explain it all soon. My dear, can you love me?"

She made no reply. But she left her hand in his, and one needs no other answer.

"But tell me," she said again, "why you keep on saying that you are the same as Kit? You are not—you are not. I could not love you, if I had not forgotten Kit. You are Denny—you are tall and handsome. How could I think I loved that poor Kit? And oh! how can you love me, when you know that once I thought I loved that other man? I wonder you do not despise me."

"Rosie!" he groaned, "your words pierce my heart. How can I explain? What shall I say? What have I done? What will become of us?"

At two o'clock in the morning there were left in the drawing-room only the two young men. They glared guiltily at each other.

"I am afraid," said Kit, with manifest unwillingness, "that there is more trouble before us."

"What's that?"

"Why—oh! no doubt a few words of explanation will make all clear. As soon as we are again exchanged we can have a little interview—both together—with—with the young lady."

"What the Devil have you done now?" cried Denny.

"I admired Geraldine above any other woman that I have ever seen. I admired her from the first

moment that I saw her. She is the only woman with whom I could pass my life."

"Well?"

"Well, I have told her so—and she thinks it is Kit himself—and she has accepted me. I ought to be the happiest of mortals, but I am not, because to morrow I shall be Denny Stirling, and I have gathered that she is prejudiced against you—or him—or me. Says that Denny reminds her of Kit at his worst."

"Geraldine has accepted me?"

"No—me. But she will want this little explanation."

Denny smote his brow with an interjection not found in the grammar or taught in the schools or permitted in the play-ground, and rushed from the room.

CHAPTER THE LAST.

TAKE YOUR FREEDOM.

EARLY in the morning, before the maids were about, Denny came downstairs, dressed, and sallied forth into the garden. His face was pale, and despair sat upon his brow. Dark rings were round his eyes. He stood upon the terrace, looking about him. Then he tossed his arms as one who is in great trouble of mind. William, the under-gardener, who was mowing the lawn, thought his master must really be having 'em again; otherwise why should he look so queer, and throw about his arms?

There was, however, one more person up and out. This was none other than Kit. He had been out half an hour or more already. Presently, seeing Denny, he came forth, shamefaced.

- "You here?" Denny cried.
- "Yes, I am here. I was restless; I got up early," said Kit gloomily. "I have not slept a single wink the whole night for thinking."
 - "Nor have I. What shall we do?"
- "Let us consider the situation from the outside,"
 said Denny, endeavoring after impartiality. "Let
 us put it before ourselves plainly and without the
 least reserve."

- . "Well, then, let us try."
- "Last night, when you told me about Geraldine and yourself I ran away, because I was afraid—yes, I was actually afraid to tell you what had happened to me only an hour or two before. It complicates the situation horribly."
 - "Not fresh troubles?"
- "Yes, fresh troubles. I was resolved, I told you, to explain everything to Rosie. I tried to make her understand, but I couldn't. And last night, driven to despair, I tried again. I told her that I had never ceased to love her. I told her, as plainly as I could speak, that I was, in fact, the real Kit, who had never changed in mind; and when I thought she was on the straight track for understanding, I—I—in fact—I kissed her, and then I found that she hadn't understood anything at all. And now she believes that she is engaged to Denny Stirling."
 - "Understand me," said Kit, firmly, "no power on earth shall make me marry Rosie."
 - "And understand me. Not for worlds would I marry Geraldine."
 - "I do not intend to let you."

There was silence. The men were resolute.

- "Well, what is to be done?" asked Denny. "It won't help us to quarrel. What can be done?"
- "I don't know. At least, the only thing——" he looked wistfully at his friend, and paused.
 - "Let us once more try to face the situation. Ger-

aldine will never listen to Denny Stirling. Rosie will never listen to Kit."

"That is the plain truth. You couldn't put the case more plainly."

"As for the work you have done in my name, I shall not carry it on. I shall let it drop. This is a short and easy way out of the difficulty. Better than long-winded explanations."

"That won't help us with the girls."

"No, it won't. And now there is no time for anything to be done. It is the most horrible difficulty. Suppose we go on as we are for another three months."

"What is the good of that? Geraldine will become more attached to me, and Rosie to you. An extension of time will only make things worse. As for changing at all," said Kit, "I don't want to change. I am quite comfortable as I am. I shall, be extremely sorry to give you up. I feel as if I could stay here altogether. The mansion, so to speak, is comfortable and sound. In a few years it may become too roomy. The necessity of daily work is a most delightful stimulus, and I really associate this frame—this lodging—not you at all—with the success which has attended my three months of work."

"Well?"

"I have won for you an excellent character," said Kit, severely. "As for your new style, I should like you to compare your former style, slipshod and ungrammatical, with your later, clean and correct."

Denny grunted.

- "We must change back," Kit repeated, with a look of inquiry. "That is inevitable, of course."
 - "I suppose that we must change back again."
- "It will be horrid," said Denny. "I believe you've set everybody's back up with your priggish airs."
- "If you come to that," returned the other, "I suppose you think it will be a pleasant thing for me to find myself transformed into a he Lady Bountiful."
- "Ah!" said Denny, humbly, "then I feel as if I hadn't done enough. I ought to have made a much better use of the opportunity. Perhaps I have partly failed to rise to the situation. Yet I think I have done nearly all that could be expected of a man who has always regarded a bank-note with awe, and a hundred pounds, all in a lump, as like unto an inaccessible peak. You will forgive me for not making a better use of my time?"
- "We won't re-open that question," said Kit.

 "Look here, all the rest could be got over; but this business of the girls can't."
- "No, it can't. I see no way out of it—none at all, except more explanations, a blazing row, and perhaps the influence of time."
- "Time will do no good in this case. Geraldine, poor girl"—his voice broke—"she thinks that Kit

is changed for good. When she sees him fall back into the old courses, it will break her heart."

"But you must tell her."

"You have tried telling Rosie, and she didn't understand. Do you believe that anybody will understand? It is an old story—an "Arabian Night" story: the Jinn and King Solomon exchange bodies—King Robert is turned out of his body by the angel—everybody knows the story by heart; but nobody will believe it in these days. We may go on explaining till we are black in the face! Geraldine will only go on believing that Kit has gone back to his frivolous and idle courses because he was tired of being serious and industrious."

"And Rosie will go on believing that Denny, to whom she was engaged, has treated her with the same icy coldness as she experienced from Kit. Good heavens! A second time! It is enough to kill her."

"Then, again, what is to be done?"

There was silence.

"My friend," said Kit, after a pause, "I have been thinking this matter over all night."

"So have I."

"And I have found a way out of it—the only way. I trust to your calm, cold reason, although it certainly entails upon you a great sacrifice, to adopt my way."

"Any way—any way—never mind the sacrifice, if it will only make Rosie happy."

- "There is this way left. To remain exactly as we are."
 - "What!"
- "We must not change at all. That is the only way. We must remain as we are. We must somehow make it impossible that there should be any change."
 - "Oh! that is impossible."
 - "On the contrary, quite possible."
 - "What! Am I to rob you of your fortune?"
- "The fortune has never brought me any happiness. Take it—take the paltry money and welcome to it."
- "He calls a fortune of three millions 'the paltry money'! No, my friend; I can do much for you, but this I cannot do."
 - "You must."
 - "I will not."
- "You shall. Consider, there is Geraldine. She will certainly—most certainly break her heart if you do not consent. And there is Rosie—to be treated a second time to neglect and coldness. Oh! it would be the most cruel, the most outrageous thing. And it will certainly happen, because I really will not undertake again to look the lover. I have tried once and I have failed. I could not try again. As for your misery and mine, I do not speak, we need not consider them."

This is always a safe and conventional thing to say

—a thing that the pit quite understands, though dismal looks proclaim that the speaker is considering his own misery very much indeed. "The exchange, I say, is so vastly to my advantage that I hardly dare to propose it. My fortune in exchange for my work! It is giving an oyster shell for the mines of Potosi."

"Absurd! There are three millions of money—three great massive millions!"

"What is money compared with the great cause which I have begun to preach?"

"Well, and how is one to give up one's own self—one's memories?"

"You won't. After a bit you will clean forget your old self. Don't let that trouble you. And think of Rosie. She likes wealth: she will delight in soft and luxurious ease and idleness."

"She would."

"And with her always at your side," the tempter continued, "think of the beautiful verses you would write with no pressure from without—no trouble about making money. I believe there is an opening just now for a society poet. The post is vacant, step into it."

"If I consented, it would be under conditions. You would have to take two-thirds of the money."

"Not a sixpence—not a penny. It is against my principles. There should be no rich men at all.' When the present race of rich men dies out there

shall be no more. Besides, I must have the stimulus of necessity: without necessity there can be no good work. No conditions."

"Then flatly, I cannot."

Upon this Kit, with a silver tongue and the pertinacity of a mosquito, began all over again to argue it out.

Once more Denny refused except upon conditions.

Again Kit began. This time he drew so moving a picture of what he intended to do—what he could not choose but do: how his eyes, ice-cold and strange, would once more greet the lover-like eyes of the unfortunate girl, mocked and insulted a second time: how her reason would totter and give way, how she would linger bereft of reason till death released her—and all—everything—all this misery because her lover refused to accept a fortune."

"Well," said Denny at length, moved to submission by this terrible prospect, "I agree."

Once more they shook hands.

"And now," said Kit, "I suppose nothing is to be done."

"Nothing—except, perhaps, to avoid the mesmeric sleep and to break this phial."

He drew the box from his pocket and dropped the bettle on the stones of the terrace. Denny felt a curious faintness and dizziness; for a few moments he saw nothing. Then he recovered, and saw his friend

Kit looking about him as if asking if anything had happened.

"Denny, my friend," he said, "why are you up so early? It is only half-past seven. Has anything happened?"

"I seem to have been restless. And you?"

"General nervousness. Too much work, perhaps. Let us take a sharp walk before breakfast."

"What a pretty box!" said Denny, picking up a carved sandal-wood box. "And who has been breaking bottles in the terrace?"

"It's very odd," Kit replied. "I must be nervous. A kind of a sort of—a—a—half-idea or imperfect recollection crossed my mind just as you spoke, as if I knew the meaning of that box. Never mind the thing! It belongs, I suppose, to one of the girls. How sweet and fresh is the morning air! Denny, I wish you could sympathize a little with my work and my principles. I should like to convert you above all things. A rich man among us is impossible. Once converted, you would hand over all your money to the State."

"Thank you, Kit. No! I shall keep my money, and use it for the individuals—myself and Rosie first. I should like to use a great deal of it for Rosie. She shall go dressed in silk attire—in silk attire," he repeated, singing the words.

"You are pretty changed, old man."

"If you come to that, so are you."

"It was time for me to work, wasn't it?"

"The old careless Kit was perhaps the more interesting. As for me, love has done it; that, and an improved view of responsibilities, which I owe to you, Kit, before your new departure."

"The new departure! Well, I have Geraldine for my companion and for solace. A woman may not lead or guide, but she may accompany and she may console. To think that I should have been blind for all these years! I shall get married as soon as I can. As for the club and the fellows there, I have already dropped them. Poor old Pinder is really too much for anybody. Did he impetrate a loan?"

"He did!"

They turned up at breakfast, fresh, smiling, and happy. And, though all the rest were saddened by the approaching break-up, these two young men preserved a cheerfulness that, under the circumstances, was curious. But it was felt to be a compliment to the two girls.

As a general rule, things spoken seriously, earnestly, or, as we say, from the heart, ought not to be spoken at breakfast, or at lunch, or even at dinner, because of the dreadful flatness which falls upon the rest of the day. The evening is the time for emotions. On this occasion, however, an hour or so before the train which should take them away, it was permitted to Denny to speak, after breakfast, a few words of meaning.

"My dear friends," he said, looking around him, "since yesterday morning, when we were all dismal, a most curious thing has happened: I don't quite know what, but I feel an immense relief. seemed to me, then—I don't know why—as if everything was all over, and nothing worth having could ever happen again. Now, I understand that we are only beginning, and I've got to tell you something that will please you, I hope: Sophia is going to stay here as chatelaine, and this house will be kept open all the year round. Let us fill it with people who have been pining for sunshine and a holiday, and a little rest and happiness. After breakfast, Sophia is going to unpack her things. Robbie, my boy, you had better stay here, too, until the cold weather begins."

They all pressed round him saying kind things. But the tears rose to the eyes of some.

"You have done for me what you little expected," Denny went on. "Let me confess. Before you came, I was growing morose—the burden of great riches proved greater than I could bear. I had no duties and no responsibilities. You have made me understand that such a man as myself can have no use at all in the world but to make some few happier. I must not waste the money, but I may use it to make some few happier. We will leave Kit, with his new philosophy, to look after the common weal. I shall content myself with individuals. He may

work for humanity—I will work for humans. He may contend that no one ought to be rich. Very good—I shall not argue with him. I am rich. I accept the situation—and without quarrelling with the social arrangements which made that possible. But we cannot be rich all to ourselves. That is the great discovery of the last three months—since you good people came here. And I owe it all to Kit, as well as his idle rhyme and his music, and many other things. Shall I make an ill use of my treasure if I apply it to extend—ever so little—the playtime of the world?"

"Oh! the playtime," said Rosie. "Do let us give a playtime to as many as we can."

"It is to brighten their lives. What does your foolish song say, Kit"?

'Life is long to those who toil not: Only long—to those who play.'"

Kit laughed, but soberly.

"Yes," he said, "that was in my playtime. Now I am going to preach the doctrine that no one ought to be allowed to become rich. Thus—"

Sophia, who was beside him, kindly laid her hand upon his lips; and so the rest of that sermon was lost.

"And my explanations?" asked Rosie, as soon as she was alone with her lover, who really had all Kit's good qualities and none of his faults. "Where are the promised explanations?" "The explanations? Oh! yes." He took both her hands. "Once there was a young man who fell in love with a girl at first sight. They do sometimes. They are made that way. But there was another fellow—and so he wouldn't speak—and he and the other fellow getting mixed, you see—and what with one fellow changing his views and another his style, and one improving his ways and the other his manners—"

"I quite see," said Rosie, "and the rest will keep. I don't want any more explanations, if only—only—if you truly love me, Denny."

He had to postpone this assurance, because Kit and Geraldine came in—and she was dressed for travelling.

"Kit," said Rosie in her softest voice—in her most affectionate manner—in her most caressing way,—"dear Kit, I understand everything now. Let us continue friends. Perhaps, unconsciously, we deceived each other. Let us continue friends for auld lang syne, and for Geraldine's sweet sake."







This book should be returned to the Library on or before the last date stamped below.

A fine of five cents a day is incurred by retaining it beyond the specified time.

Please return promptly.



